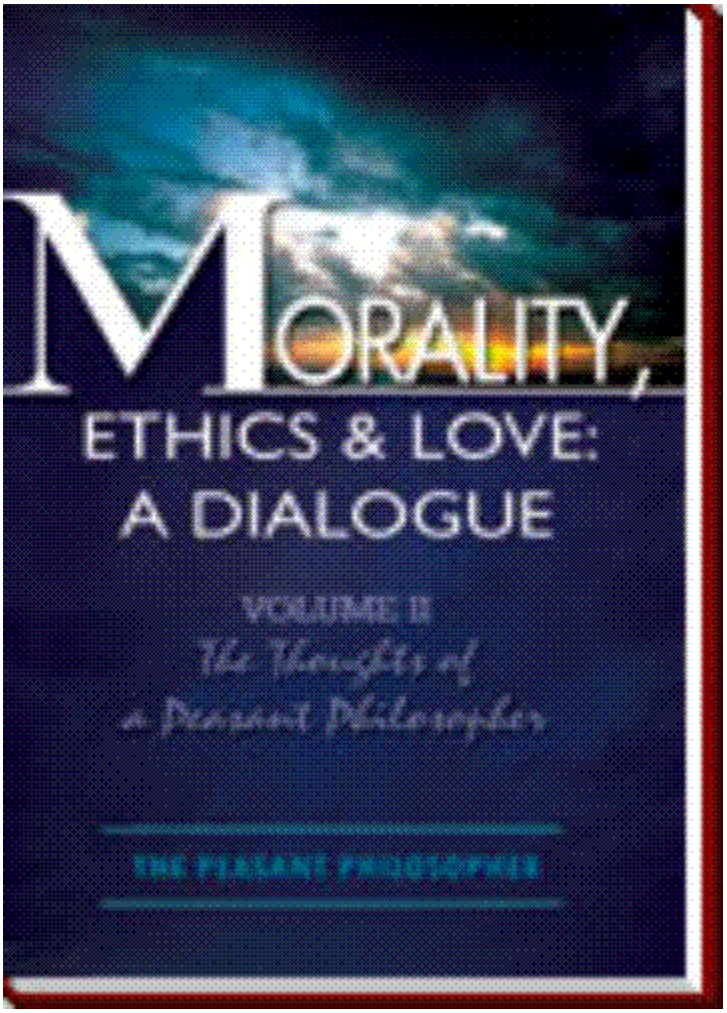

Morality, Ethics & Love: A Dialogue

Volume II

The Thoughts of a Peasant Philosopher

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Chapter XXIx

I have just stolen a car, driven it 800 miles, through a raging snowstorm and faked my own death….

I now lie in a hospital bed in the middle of nowhere on the Canadian Prairies after having my stomach pumped. After a short stay in the intensive care unit I am moved down to the mental health centre…

The center is quite nice with a lot more freedom to move around than I expected. I was in another facility prior to this little adventure, and everything there was locked down and the main door was under guard, controlled by two people in an impregnable booth.

Compared to that place this is like a resort. It has no locked doors, no guards and the main door is always open.

I like it.

They have given me a room all to myself, which I really appreciate since I am not too keen on having a roommate at this point.

I need some rest. And some time to think.

I keep pretty much to myself. I am not really interested in talking and making friends. The path I have just walked was overwhelming in terms of emotion and exhilaration. I am still weak from the effects of the drugs I had taken and the overdose has left me 20 pounds short of weight.

I take regular meals with the other people here at the facility but I do not eat much. Even if I am hungry I only pick at my food. I don't want to look too interested in anything at this particular time. I can see that many of the people here are very interested in talking and making new friends. In fact most of the people here seem very approachable. It is no great surprise, then, that under these conditions a young lady pulled up a chair beside me one day and said hello.

She is very attractive. In fact we seem to hit it off really well. We are constantly talking to each other every day. We talk about a great variety of subjects but there is one thing she avoids . . . her past. When pressed to talk about it she refuses and with a smile says there is nothing there that bothers her. Even so, there is profound sadness within every word she utters.

When I am not talking to her, much of my time is spent sitting in a large chair looking out a window and thinking. It is still winter here and the snow is falling. I've always liked snow. After a snowstorm everything always seems so perfect, like when time began and the universe was new . . . endless potential and the chance to start all over again.

It was this thought that reminded me about something powerful someone once said to me: there is no right or wrong in the world today.

Unfortunately, he never got to expand on his statement and I haven't seen him again. But I wonder what he meant. Did he mean there is no such thing as right or wrong? Or did he mean that right and wrong were totally relative? Or was there a much larger question that he was asking?

I have given much thought to what I think right and wrong is, not to mention what good and bad are. But, like society itself, I often find myself questioning my own core definitions and ideas about Morality and Ethics, no more so than this particular time in my life. I want to understand right and wrong, good and bad. But there has been so much written in the past 100 years or so that is so contradictory when it comes down to defining right and wrong. Even the idea of good and bad has been done away with when we talk about a post-metaphysical culture.

There must be something more concrete out there than relative right and wrong. Is it God? Maybe. Love? I'm not sure. But I am sure there must be something greater out there for us to hold on to, when we are in need.

At least my friend offered his opinion, although he did, in a roundabout way, end up sitting on the proverbial fence.

******

I went into her room today to see if she wanted to play cards. I found her hiding on top of her armoire, her arms cut from the wrists to the elbow.

It was apparent she had taken a sharp object to her skin. Thankfully it was not sharp enough to cut the artery, although the cuts were deep enough that she would need medical attention.

After the incident we talked. I could see that whatever was troubling her was not receiving the proper attention at this facility.

I told the nurses and the doctors on staff that her intention was not to remain here much longer. I thought I had told them in no uncertain terms that their attention should be more focused on her movements within the facility and not the fact that she did not seem to be much of a threat to herself. To me, and I am no expert, there were overt signs of one wanting to take her own life. And I must say, these sign were pervasive.

It was not too long after that incident when another young woman ended up at the facility. I found out quickly that this new girl and my new friend came from the same town and were best friends. They talked relentlessly and remained together most of the time. I was on the outs and did not find occasion to talk to my new friend very often. I didn't mind since it looked like she enjoyed the company and she did seem to be smiling a little more than before.

Today, as I was returning from a short outing from the facility, I discovered that my friend had drowned herself. I was devastated, not only for the loss of a friend, but the fact that all the staff had disregarded my information and my warnings that she was intent on ending her life.

It was after this tragic incident that her best friend and I started talking. She first introduced herself to me when we were both standing in line for our medication. I soon found out it was easier for her to convey her feelings, emotions and thoughts through writing.

The following is that dialogue between her and me.

04/27/96
Well, I guess we can't talk. As I am writing this, I am crying. My constant isn't noticing. Which is good. I had a fairly good day, but after my parents left, my happiness shattered like glass. My parents can't seem to understand why I'm sad. I've tried to explain to them that 3 deaths since Christmas isn't good. But…Well, I'm very upset. I need very badly to talk to someone. I'm trying to show people I'm happy, but it is so hard. And I have to admit that knowing that you're off the market…I have my pop can which I can easily break and slash my wrists.

I'm sorry for telling you all this. But I can't help it. I feel like I'm going nuts.

Please write me back. I need to know if…I just need to know that there's someone out there that cares. Ok?

Reply:
Being there for the death of her best friend had really shaken this young girl. She was playing the piano in the very room leading to the bathroom. She could see her friend as the doctors and nurses tried in vain to breath life back into the girl who had just taken her own life by drowning herself in the bathtub.

I'm not really too sure what to say to my new friend. For my part I feel somewhat at a loss. The whole episode taught me a valuable lesson that I will never forget. It taught me that what I thought constituted help in this world is not. Just listening and offering a supportive hug or delicate ear to a problem is not help. Even suggesting a solution to a problem seems to be filled with nothing but empty hope and meaning. And I think for the first time I realized that what I had offered in the way of help was just as insincere and empty in terms of what the doctors and nurses of this facility were offering.

The medical establishment, and science in general, think they have solved the mind/body problem with Prozac and other drugs. But I realize many of the people here have a problem deep within their person, and not in their mind. In essence it is their soul that is crying out for help. It is that very part of us that makes us human that is in many respects crying out for help. And no drug ever created would be of any help or for that matter reach the very core of what makes us unique. But, at this point I am not too sure what I can offer in the way of help to her.

That afternoon we met in the lunchroom of the facility and talked about the weather and other incidental things. As we talked I could see that the world in which she was living must and could only be described as hell. She had many deep cuts on her arms from gouging a sharp object into her skin. She had dark circles around her eyes from not sleeping properly, and her gaze was filled with the stare of a person that was heavily sedated.

After my failure with her friend, I wondered what I could possibly offer her. She was under constant supervision by a staff member, something I had asked the staff to do with our friend but was never done. We only talked a few minutes before she returned to her room to try and get some sleep. I saw her use the phone once that day but the conversation did not seem to go very well.

We did not see each other the rest of the day.

04/29/96
Instead of talking, I'd rather write. Besides, if your "chick" saw us talking, she might be just a bit jealous. How come she never eats, or how come you two are rarely together? The staff knows about you two anyway (wasn't me), so…I think I'll stop yakking before I say something I regret.

I'm feeling very suicidal now, and I don't know what to do. I'm feeling this way because losing 3 friends to death in three months is getting to me. Also, my ex-boyfriend wants to break out of jail and get back together with me. He was abusive, and I was lucky to get out of that relationship. I don't want him free anymore. I'm also feeling suicidal because, well, just because I'm depressed.

I have to admit I had a bit of a crush on you. But I'm over it. Depression kills everything. I'm also depressed because I've decided to never touch a musical instrument again. I'm never going to sit down and draw, or sculpt, or carve, or anything. When She died, part of me died with her. So I am thinking of just dying to end my future pain. (Make sense?) I really gotta talk. Like soon. Ok?

Reply:

She usually had her note sent to me through another patient at the facility. It was as if she was preparing the way for our talks. For a girl who could be no more than 18, she seemed to have a host of problems that did not seem to have any real solution.

When we met today I could see that I really brightened her day. She did not really talk to anyone else but me. She was very hostile towards the staff, and for that I could not blame her. But I could see that she was not getting any help in here at all, a place where her parents had put her out of utter desperation I suspect, and even in here there seemed little anyone could do for her. It was like she was just searching for someone who knew how to help her.

I began to suspect that she was looking for that help to come from me. The fact that she was somewhat jealous of another girl who was often around me seemed to indicate that my suspicions were true. And how deep did these feelings for me truly go?

04/30/96
There is a reason why I wanted to talk to you. I have to admit I like you. I don't know what's going on between you and that "chick," but I'm going to say what's on my mind. This is the 90s and I ain't just gonna stand from a distance watching you.

Do you want to go out with me? Once I get privileges I'd be able to get out of this yucky place for a while. I'd say this to you in person, but I'd just start laughing, or crying or ramble on about something as dumb as bland coffee. Do you understand that?

I've found that being around you cheers me up. If you say yes, I'll be so happy. But don't be afraid to say no. I may get a bit depressed, but I won't be suicidal. Anyway, there's something about you that has attracted me to you. By the way, your note encouraged me a lot. And to me you are a good friend. You make me smile when I'm down, and darn it, I like you. Ok. 'nuff said.

Reply:
I was just heading to bed, when she rounded the corner of the hallway and slipped a note into my hand. She said she would wait for the answer in the morning and that she is really interested in knowing what I think. And with that she fled down the hallway and out of sight.

I did not have to open it to already know she was asking me out. I could tell from our conversations that she was becoming more and more interested in me as the days went on.

It was not surprising then that I didn't get much sleep that night. I did not really know what I should do. I mean, first of all it had taken me a year and a half to plan my little insanity trip, with numerous priorities and tasks to accomplish at the end of it all. Not that this girl was not important, but I really had to think about how all this was going to work

out with what I knew I had to accomplish. It was difficult to bring another person into my life at this particular point in time when I had no choice in certain decisions and tasks that just lay ahead.

But more than that I really am concerned about whether or not I can help this girl. At this point I have no idea what her problem or problems could be. But I did already have a great head start in that I understood her problem to be one that resided deep within her soul, and not one that seemed to be seriously psychological or pathological. I hope!

It was about two in the morning when I believed I had weighed all the pros and cons and made my decision about what I was going to do. If I did not help this girl, she would no doubt end by giving up her life before she even knew what possibilities existed for her. Of this I was certain. Her pain was much greater than that of her friend, and the fact that her friend had succeeded made me all the more certain she would follow in her footsteps.

I wasn't quite sure how I was going to help her, but help her I would, and for as long as it took . . . for her sake and the memory of that young lady I could not save.

05/06/96
I can express myself better when I write.

The only thing that has stopped me from hanging myself is you. With you I feel like there's nothing in the world that can hurt me again. Losing Her was very hard, emotionally. I feel so lost without Her. She and I could have been twins. We were so alike. Part of me died with Her. I am giving up music. I'll never play another note again. I love music, but every time I come near the piano, I remember that night. I know it'll be the same if I play violin, or guitar, or clarinet, or whatever. I can't go on with my life. At least not now. I guess I'm afraid that if I move on, I'll forget Her, and what She was all about.

You've been such a great guy, and I'm hoping you'll keep it up. Ok? So, if you feel that I'm going to do something dumb, I guess you can tell someone.

Reply:
We spend much of the time together. We play cards, watch TV and go out to the courtyard to smoke. Well, she smokes, I just tell her it's a nasty habit and that she should quit. Most of the time we talk about everything and anything. But we don't really talk that much about the place we're in or about the death of our mutual friend.

I'm learning a great deal about her as the days pass. I think my greatest weapon in this battle to help her is listening to what she is saying and what she is not. If I was going to help her, the more she told me the better.

She was adopted at an early age and seemed to have had a traumatic childhood, before and after her adoption. Her birth mother was young and unable to handle her as a child along with the rest of her siblings. She seemed to like her adoptive parents enough, but

she would not really talk much about how the family functioned as a whole. I never really heard her say she felt loved or that she felt she was a part of the family. In fact it seemed there was a problem lurking there, but it was just sitting underneath the surface of our conversation.

The more we talked the more I seemed to sense a great disconnect between her and the rest of the world. I could not really put my finger on it, but there was much more troubling this girl than I, or anyone, could have suspected.

In a sense it seemed like she was having great difficulty reconciling two worlds. But what these worlds constituted or how they were defined I do not yet know.

More interesting than what she was telling me, was the fact that the more time I spent around her the more I began to like her as a friend. But where and how this relationship is to keep going forward, I am at a crossroads.

I have just been released from hospital and have found myself a small room to rent in a house. She, for the time being, is still residing in the hospital. I thought it was very interesting that before I left, the staff of the facility had me sign a document stating I would not take any action legal or otherwise against the staff for their involvement, or should I say lack of involvement, in the suicidal death of that young girl.

More to the point, they seemed to indicate it was in my best interest to sign and not reveal any information I might have to anyone. Their reasoning was that I was still charged with theft over $10,000 and my psychological profile still had to be filed with the courts. They definitely indicated that my not signing could prove to be somewhat less than helpful if I did not want to spend any time in jail.

Figuring I had too much on my mind, I signed with the knowledge that at the proper time the whole truth would eventually come out.

After signing the paper I walked out and made a beeline for the nearest garbage bin. In it went all the pills I had been talking for the last few weeks . . . prescriptions and all.

05/27/96
I am writing this because it's paper, and I can say what I want to say without freezing.

I have never been so happy before. You are the light into my dark world, and I know I can break free from the bonds that hold me tight. For you, I'll give up drugs completely. It hurts me to see you worried about me. This is the first time in my life I've been willing to give up anything and everything for someone. You mean so much to me, words cannot express how I feel towards you.

With you, I feel so different. Before, happiness was only a dream. Now it's reality. With you, I feel safe, and I don't have to worry about getting you angry at me and hitting me. I <u>know</u> now that you wouldn't. And, to tell you the truth, a person has to be <u>very</u> special to

me for me to give up drugs. I trust you, and I believe in you. And everyday, I thank God for bringing you into my life.

Also, for you (and only you) I'll wear my … other clothes. I have some pretty interesting outfits you might like. I like them, but no one's ever seen me wear them. Geez, the things you make me do.

I am going to put all my effort into making our relationship (and move) a success. I don't want to lose you, and I'm still amazed at how I ever got the courage to ask you out. Maybe it was the pills. I never imagined finding the guy of my dreams in a mental health centre at the age of 17. By the way, your boots were the second thing I noticed about you. First was your eyes.

Anyway, I think I'm rambling now. Oh well.

You'll never have to worry about me trying to change you. Trust me, if I didn't like you for who you are, I would not have asked you out. Also, from this day on, I am free of drugs, so don't worry about having drugs in our apartment or my car, 'cuz there ain't gonna be any. Oh yeah. One more thing. I'm giving up my bad eating habits too. I want to make you happy, not worried.

Like I said before, you are the first person who puts up with my moods and habits. And to me, that's a sign that you are a keeper. Every minute we're together, you make me happy and I feel secure. And like I said before, you are the only one who has been able to pull me out of depression. Thank you for being so wonderful and supportive.

Reply:
Not long after I moved into my new place, she came over to spend some time with me on an afternoon when I wasn't working. She had been released from the hospital and was living back at home.

When she came over she seemed fine and we had a good time talking and getting to know each other now that we were actually alone and not being watched. She left and later returned, her eyes glazed over and she had become very lethargic. I demanded to know where she had gone. She told me she went to a friend's house in town to shoot up.

I told her in no uncertain terms that I would not put up with her doing drugs. It was either her life of misery or one with me. I have never liked drugs, tried drugs, or believed in their existence. To alter the state of one's mind to escape reality only offers the user nothing but illusion and misery. There are no good side effects to the use of drugs. Those who say there are good things associated with drugs are liars, pushers and addicts. Their opinions are not to be taken seriously.

It was also during this time she told me that the only reason she did them was to escape the oppression she was feeling from being at home. She said that the situation had gotten worse since she had returned. She said she now felt totally isolated and not a part of the

family. Her brother would not talk to her and her mother was more confrontational than ever.

Upon hearing this I suggested we look for an apartment in town. I had a job, and I said she could get one too. It would be good for her. I told her it seemed that the situation at home was letting her know it was time to leave.

She agreed. And, the fact that we now lived an hour and a half apart was putting a strain on our relationship.

So with that, we started looking for a home.

Only after she left was I able to sit down and contemplate my future with this girl. Much had happened in such a short period of time. I was still not too sure how to help her. But the fact remained that she trusted me and she was beginning to be interested in doing things other than hurting herself. When she was around me, she did not completely dwell on her past. It would seem her love for me was what keeps her going. And as for me,..

I had to confess, over time, I had fallen in love with the girl I wanted to help.

XX2x

06/03/96
I'm writing because if I told you this in person, I'd freeze. Anyway, here goes.

I want to thank you for being so wonderful. I know now I can trust you, and I don't have to worry about you hurting me. Also, a person has to be very special to me in order for me to make myself quit drugs. And I am very willing to give up drugs so I don't lose you. Words cannot express how much you mean to me.

I am going to put all my strength and effort into making us and our new home successful. I still feel right about what we are doing. And I have to admit my feelings for you are getting stronger. Much stronger.

Before I met you, I was miserable. I hated waking up every morning and facing the cold, rough world. Happiness used to be a dream. Now it's reality. You are the light into my dark world, and I have to say that I'm falling fast and hard for you. I'm so happy now, it seems like nothing is impossible. I'm still amazed that I've found you, and I'm still not over the shock of you saying yes on May 1st.

I hope everything works out for you and the court case. Although I can't do much for you, I'll be there for you and give you as much support as I possibly can. I hate to see you worried. It makes me want to take your pains and worries away, hold you tight, and make it all better. But I can't really. All I can do is hold you and want to never let you go. No matter what the outcome, I'll always be there for you. And I always keep my word.

I trust you, I believe in you, and I love you. Please don't ever leave me. I need you too much.

Sweet dreams, bright eyes.

Reply:
We found a very nice two-bedroom apartment after a little searching through the classifieds. It was funny, but when we both saw it for the first time we liked it. We moved what little we had in one afternoon. I bought a bed, and she brought some furniture from home. Her parents gave us an old coffee table and an old kitchen table. We bought a used couch from our new landlords who were anxious to get rid of it so they could get something a little newer.

Her parents also helped with the purchase of dishes, pots, pans and silverware. On the surface it seemed they wanted this to work for their daughter, although I could see from the countenance of her mother that she was very skeptical of me. Not to mention that she did not like what we were doing. She was a devoted Catholic who did not believe in living together before marriage. Her father, though, was much easier to talk to. I could see in him real concern for his daughter and his desire to make her happy.

As we settled into our new apartment she insisted we keep separate bedrooms. She also wanted to maintain a great deal of independence from me, through her desire to pay half of all the bills.

It seemed we were to be more roommates than a couple. But that's how she wanted it. In my mind it was a good idea. If we kept some distance between us perhaps she could still confide in me her problems without feeling that she was putting her future with me in jeopardy.

06/05/96
I'm not sure what happened today. One minute we were okay, the next minute we were practically at each other's throat.

I understand you. But you have to understand that I don't know all your opinions about how we should live at our apartment. Also, you have to understand I'm not emotionally stable, and the littlest things will set me off the deep end. I'm sorry, and for your info, I wasn't laughing at you. I was laughing at your reaction. I laughed because I was reassuring myself I wasn't going to get a tooth knocked out. You got that same look as He got when He's about to hurt me. I freaked out.

I watched a very sad show today. A guy killed himself at his school. I thought of her again, and really got depressed. Boy, two and a half hours of hard crying can really wear a person out. I wanted you to be here so I could talk to you. But you're not, so I'm writing.

I really think of suicide a lot. But I won't. For myself, for you, and definitely for Her, I'll stay alive. Every day I fight my inner battles, and so far, the war isn't anywhere near over.

Her death really hit me hard. I had just gotten over my other friends' deaths, and then She did what she did. I cannot move on. For the rest of my life, I'll have to deal with all those deaths. I can't do it. I try to keep myself from missing them so much, but it's just too hard. I laugh, but inside I'm crying. When you ask me if I'm ok, I always tell you I'm fine. But I'm not. Don't get me wrong, I'm very happy to be here with you, but losing those people is getting to me.

Once again, I'm sorry. I absolutely hate being mad at you. And I hate knowing that you're mad, or disappointed.

I was mad because of your reaction in front of our friends. If we were alone, I wouldn't have cared.

So many freakin' rules, you're driving me insane. But I guess I can live with them. I'll live with rules, but I won't live without you.

Reply:
It's funny but I was thinking about rules myself. It was the other day that we drove to the courthouse for my final hearing in regard to my charge of theft.

Standing there in the courtroom listening to the prosecutor and my defense council detail to the judge the plea bargain they worked out for me was interesting. I had a few minutes to think and it was about rules.

In particular I thought about how we have taken everything of importance that makes our civilization workable and turned it into a commodity. In particular I am talking about good and bad. Right or wrong. In essence morality and ethics.

In particular I was thinking what Aristotle said in Neumechian Ethics about certain actions always being wrong. I remember theft being one of them. But I wonder if Aristotle, in his wildest imagination, could have envisioned a world so out of touch with what truly is right and wrong, good or bad. Or even if he could have foreseen in his wildest dreams that these very concepts would be sold to the highest bidder to sell everything from economic philosophy and political hypocrisy to empty religious dogma on a global scale . . . with nothing of real worth being found in any of their definitions.

Probably not.

Therefore, as I see things, if the world is not going to play with any definite rules, neither will I. But I will make sure that if I do make up the rules it will be for all the right reasons and for nothing less than good intentions. Even, perhaps, it will be defined as something greater than the common good.

Standing there, I wondered if I was being judged a good or evil man by my peers?

As for me, I don't yet know which best describes me and my actions. I guess only time will tell.

In the end I was given an unconditional discharge for all my crimes, which meant no criminal record or jail time. Just as I had planned and hoped. My thoughts drifted back to Aristotle and the other philosophers I have read over the years, as the judge instructed me on my behavior and antics. I always found it interesting that most, if not all, philosophers seemed to interpret the world in short sharp bits that have no connection to each other. It is as if they all view events as static little bits of information and action that have no connection to the past or the future they are building. This, to me, has always been the flaw in their philosophy.

From my perspective, I know what I did was not wrong, and that there are no unrelated aspects to life.

I hope that is how history records this event as well.

07/11/96
What I am about to say is hard for me, as you must already know. I feel you should know about my past because I love you and I want you to know.

When He and I began to go out, He was sweet, romantic, and quite charming. He won me over when He said He'd supply me with drugs and alcohol. To me, then, He seemed like a very likable guy. So I stayed with Him. About three weeks after we started going out, He began to change . . .

I love seeing a future with you. I love you so much, I cry just thinking about it. (Like I'm doing right now). I don't want to do stupid things to split us up. You are a part of me, and always will be. With you I can live a very happy life. I am going to try much harder to make us work and stay together. I'm tired of people trying to split us up. Like you said about me, you are my life. You are the light into my dark world, and I'm <u>not</u> letting you go. I love you too much.

Thank you for everything. I can never hope to repay you for all you've done for me.

Reply:
Of anything that consumes the human mind, there is nothing less important than the three issues of morality, ethics and love. It is the meaning and definition found in these human concepts that are the foundation to any society or individual that may exist. Without them we are lost. With them we are confused or at best unsure of who we are.

This girl, as are many, is struggling with the reality of the world and what she has been taught as the definite meanings and definitions to these three concepts. And as with

many, what she has been told does not reflect the reality of her life. It is this continuous battle that has torn away the strength and her will. It is this battle that is being waged within her soul and it is the cause of her despair and unwillingness to continue with life.

Great evil has been perpetrated upon her by those in whom she placed her trust – not only by those within society but nature itself. By those she has been told she should trust and love.

Many things have been written about the soul. From its composition to its strength and its capacity for love, but not much has been written about the battles that are fought on this ephemeral ground. These battles are not fought with weapons of steel. What hurts the body cannot penetrate this part of human existence. The battles here, in some sense, are more important and sometimes even more vicious than anything we may encounter on a battlefield fought between armies and ultimately individuals. The battles fought here are always waged against oneself.

The soul fights with emotion, contradiction, faith, love, hate, and a host of like-minded entities. As with anything, it can be hurt, and, at worst, it can die. But for a person to give up the desire to live suggests the battles have been so torturous and so vicious that the very foundation of the soul is giving way.

Reading her letter and listening to her for some time now, I knew her soul was in such a fragile state that death by her own hand could not be ruled out. She was reaching out in a last attempt to find support to carry on, the enduring idea that hope and faith represent the last pillar upon which the soul rests. This and my love was all that was keeping her from fulfilling her desire to end her pain and misery. But just comforting the soul and offering it support through another would not be enough to undo the damage that already had been done. What was important was to show her that it was possible to live with these three concepts in a way in which the contradictions did not exist where they had been seen before. In my mind, only when the internal fighting stopped would the damage stop and hopefully be reversed.

This meant I was going to have to take make clear my understanding one way or the other, on all three issues. Something that, up to now, I never have done. I guess in the end you cannot stand on a fence and say these concepts are irrelevant or for that matter indefinable if one really wants to understand themselves or their world realistically and objectively.

08/10/96
Love

Love has no boundaries
No limits, no endings
It rules the heart
Controls the mind
And never ceases to exist

Love can be strong + free
Instead of weak and captured
All it takes are two to free one
A beat that never dies

Love is hard work and willingness
To make it to the top
Always goes for the gold
Never settles for silver or bronze

Love is a sweet song
Played by a heavenly symphony
Love is a feeling, thought, and move
That exists between me and you.

Reply:
The last few days have been extremely chaotic. I phoned my mother to see how she was holding up and she told me that her health was deteriorating further. She said she had just returned from the hospital and that, coupled with the fact that she was alone, was taking a great toll on her. With no time to spare, my new girlfriend and I drove the 800 miles in one day to go and get my mother.

We held hands the entire 800 miles. . .

We are now on our way back home, with my mother fast asleep in the backseat and my girlfriend asleep in the passenger seat. I have some time to think about everything that just transpired in the last day and a half.

The main reasons I had stolen the car and set myself up where I did was for my mother. She had been divorced from my father for a number of years but was becoming more lost as the days, weeks, months and years went by. She lived solely on an alimony payment. Because of her health, she was unable to work. I had spent the last two years sleeping on her living room floor and I saw that her health was failing her and debt was crushing her.

Perhaps the hardest part of the trip was when I intervened in a phone call between my mother and father. I had gone over to my father's residence to tell him that I had come back to the city to get my mother and take her back to her hometown. He told me that since I had gone, the two had spent some time together. This would have been their first meeting, without lawyers present, since their divorce. But from my father's impression of the meeting, the two still did not get along. I told my father about my mother's desperate state and the need for her to leave with me so she could properly get a handle on her health and money problems. It was during this conversation that the phone rang.

I told him if it was my mother and if he really did care for her at all anymore, to make it clear they had a good life together, but they could never get back together. She needed

help and this help was not in this city; it was only through me that she might be able to have a decent future. Before he picked up the phone he agreed.

It was my mother.

With great tact and understanding he told her there was no future for the two of them together and she had to get on with her life. He told her she should move back with me and should get on with her life, noting that it had been nearly 4 years now since their divorce. It was the most heart-wrenching incident I could ever remember listening to. I'm sure I could feel my mother's heart break for good, as my father told her they would no longer be together. And with that, 20 some odd years of marriage were over for good.

I was very grateful to my father for what he did. He too knew she was sick and wished me luck. He offered his love and hoped I could help her. I thanked him and left.

I knew that if I did not get my mother out of that city with me, she would try to kill herself again.

When I talked to my mother later that day, it did not take much persuading for her to realize it was best for her to move in with my new girlfriend and me. I was surprised, to say the least, but my new girlfriend was very agreeable to having my mother move in. For this sacrifice, in such an early and somewhat unorthodox relationship, I knew I would always be eternally grateful to her. But I certainly worried that there could be many unforeseen problems and complications with such a situation.

10/02/96
I am writing this letter because I need to say some things. Ok?

I love you with every fibre of my being. My love for you is so great, words cannot express it. I have told you all this before, and I will continue to tell you until the day I die. When I went to the movie, two of my friends came too. But there was 4 of us. I only went because I got a movie pass and I didn't want to let it go to waste. I didn't have fun <u>at all</u>. There was no one there for me to curl up to, or kiss, or stare at throughout the entire movie. I miss you so much that I cry because I'm not with you.

I'm beginning to not like my new friend because he's too sick minded, and still on drugs. I don't need that. I need you; physically and emotionally. I am <u>almost</u> ready to come home (by the way, I'm crying. Can you tell?) and I'm ready to take care of you. I love you so very much. You are <u>very</u> special to me, as I am to you. I need you more than anything in this world. You are my only bestest friend and, well, I <u>really</u> love you.

I'm very sorry for the way I've been acting. I know in my heart that you don't deserve to be treated that way. When you started to talk about them girls from your work place that are getting "too" friendly, I got scared that I was going to lose you. That's the only reason why I'm acting this way. I know I should know you by now, by the way, but I'm still worried. If you don't want to forgive me, I understand. I also understand (very much) that

I've hurt you. I am very angry with myself for treating you that way. It seems like all I do is hurt you, and drain you. I'm sorry. I'll understand if you don't want me anymore. But please know I still want you, need you, and love you. Very much.

You and I are one now. And always will be (for infinity+infinity+2). With you, I've shared so much. You know my fears and dislikes, and you know what makes me happy (you). You know what ticks me off and what doesn't. And you are there for me when I get bad dreams. You make it all better and no one's ever done that. You know my true hopes and dreams (to finish school and become either a counsellor or actress).

You know I want to marry you and have a family with you, and live the greatest life anyone will ever have. My mind is truly made up. You and I are meant to be, and I want you and only you.

Reply:
It did not take long before my fears were realized. Living with my mother around was too much for my new girlfriend. I think she missed being the centre of my attention. It was not long before I had to have my girlfriend admitted to the mental health centre because she was once again attacking her arms with sharp objects. She never hit the main arteries in her arms, but there was always enough blood to make me worry.

I was at work the other day (I had taken a full-time sales position in a local department store) when I decided to phone to see how she was doing. I always phoned the nurses' station before I phoned her to get a leg up on any new developments or in particular what her mood was. This way I could get a jump on the conversation and steer it in the right direction without causing too much stress.

When the nurse answered the phone I assumed she recognized my voice because all of a sudden she said she would get the doctor to talk to me. When the doctor spoke she informed me that my girlfriend had almost taken her life during the night. Apparently, she went to take a shower the night before, and the person who was watching her had walked away for only a moment. When she returned, my girlfriend had filled the bathtub with water and was found lying face down in the water, unconscious.

The doctor said that they got to her just in time. She talked about the heroic effort that the emergency personnel had put forth. She mentioned that it was only with the help of the "crash cart," that they were able to start her heart again.

I felt sick.

The doctor said she was removed from the intensive care unit earlier that morning and was now resting comfortably in her room in the centre. The doctor asked me if I would be visiting later that day.

I said that I would be there in ten minutes.

10/26/96
I am writing you this letter because I'm lonely. And by writing to you it's almost like having you here with me. Anyway, so far it's been extremely boring in here. A guy keeps following me around and asking me if I'm going to get a movie. All the guys here are watching baseball or hockey so both TVs are being used.

I've played the piano a little bit and tried to sketch but my mind's not into it. After you left, I cried for two and a half hours straight. I was thinking about what you said and I think you are right. I have to break this endless cycle and I have to deal with things differently. But I do know that one day I shall be truly Ok. Since I've told you my deepest secrets, I feel better. Now I can start the healing process and begin that happy life I've always wanted.

I know you might be disappointed in me for the way I am. All of this must be so hard on you. I'm sorry. But I will get better. I promise.

Reply:
This is now my 21st day in a row that I have gone to visit my sweetheart in the hospital. My mother is doing well and there is talk that she will be moving out soon. Her health is improving and she is now just getting a handle on her debts and bills. She too agrees that this situation with the three of us together is not good for my new girlfriend. I am afraid I have to agree, but what else could I do. I never did anticipate meeting someone like her, when all I wanted to do was help my mother.

As I drove to the hospital that evening I began to do some serious thinking about where all this was going.

The more I think about my situation, the more doubts I have about how all this is going to end. I am beginning to think that no matter how I help this young lady I am going to lose her in the end. Not to death, I am confident I can help her overcome the misery and the pain she feels.

But if I don't help her properly, truthfully and justly resolve her inner conflict both morally and ethically, she will forever revolve around these issues without ever truly breaking free. In essence she will never grow up and spiral back into her vicious circle of denial, violence and drugs. And if this happens I would not be able to be with her since that would be a failure and she would most certainly see my help as such and end our relationship. On the other hand, if I do help her reconcile herself with a suitable moral and ethical foundation and she is able to regain her footing within her soul, along with her strength and confidence, I may not be enough to keep her happy. More to the point, she will need to find that special someone who will make her happy and fulfilled.

XX3x

01/31/97
I am writing this in English class. I am supposed to be doing an assignment on Figurative + literal Language. It's really boring. I'm almost beginning to wish I never went back to school. Oh well. I'm having a hard time making friends. No one talks to me and I don't talk to no one.

How was your day? I know I should be more considerate of you. I keep saying it but I don't do anything about it. Oh, if you only knew how much I love you.

Now I'm in math class. I'm so lost. I'm going to tell the teacher I quit. Maybe. I don't know. See you in 5 mins!

Reply:
My sweetheart and I are alone once again. I was able to find a nice group home for the elderly where my mother could be properly cared for. It does not cost much and all her meals are included with her monthly fee. This leaves a good deal of money that can afford her the little things in life she needs. In fact there is enough that she can even start saving a little.

My girlfriend went back to school this month to try and finish her education. It won't be easy for her since she will be totally new to the school and she won't know anyone there. It is nice and close to where we live. In fact it is walking distance. I cook lunch and pick her up after school. We usually go for coffee after school and she tells me about her day.

I think it is very important that she finishes her education. Although I have great concern about the system itself, it does offer the only hope the youth of today have for any sort of decent life; they should get a useful education and then find a decent paying job.

02/04/97
Here I am in Social class, supposed to be reading a booklet on Canada's economic system. I can't say I like Social Studies very much, but I have to stay in it.

I got depressed today. But that's because I was worried about math. It's very frustrating when I want to be able to do equations but I can't. And it bothers me when I see all these younger people doing better than me.

I'm beginning to think that going back to school wasn't a good idea. I was called a slut today by a white guy who was showing off in front of his friends. I can't remember what he looks like, so I can't point him out. School sucks. The only classes I like are Psych and Biology. I miss you. Oh well. Only one more class to go.

Reply:
With my mother gone now, and my girlfriend at school, I am the sole supporter of the household. To say the least, things are getting very tight money wise. I am only paid minimum wage and the hours are not always fulltime. I decided to set up an appointment with social services hoping they could help with the rent or offer a little assistance for food.

When we arrived I found the reception to be less than friendly. They made it quite clear in no short order that we were not eligible for any help. It was their interpretation that since we had been living together for more than six months we were, in their eyes, a common-law couple. And furthermore, because I was working and making more money than was allowable by their standards, we were not to be helped. The social worker looked pleased when she said this.

I attempted to explain my girlfriend's mental condition and the fact that she was trying to get an education. I pointed out further that she was not comfortable at home with her parents and this was her best option. Instead the social worker stated that if she wanted to go on her own, they would be more than happy to help her. I found that statement to be totally incredible. To break up two people who choose to live together out of sheer love and happiness over an arbitrary bureaucratic position that puts money before family was absolutely immoral and unethical. If the purpose of assistance is not to help families in need, what is the point of having a department like this at all? This to me was typical of the quagmire in which today's society finds itself.

Then I pointed out that we had been living together while she was still 17. The social worker agreed with this. Then I pointed out that people under the age of 18 cannot get married in this country without parental consent.

The social worker was a little perplexed, so she brought in her supervisor.

I continued with them both present. If they viewed us to be common law they would be doing so without the law or their own regulations supporting them. I furthered my argument by stating that if you need parental consent to be married, there would then have to be parental consent for the individual who is not of the age of majority to live in a common law state as well. But since there is no such thing as parental consent to living common law, and we were not married, we had not been legally living common law for the last six months – either by the law of the land or their silly regulations.

Therefore, they would be opening themselves up to a law suit based on the basis of discrimination. Which if it did go that far would most likely cost the two of them there jobs. Since they would have failed in the agency's eyes from letting such a little matter as this get completely out of hand.

The social worker and her supervisor conferred for a moment or two in the hallway and when they returned they both had a look of disgust on their faces. The supervisor then stated in a very clear tone that they would provide my girlfriend with assistance for the

next six months only, on the basis that she was now 18 and the age of majority. Since her birthday had been less than a month away, he agreed we had not been living together in a legal common law relationship. However, if we were still together six months from this date and assistance was still required, they would have to rethink their position and probably discontinue their support.

With that I was satisfied. It would give me six months to find a better paying job.

02/12/97
Just a little note to let you know I love you with all my heart.

I didn't have a good sleep last night. I had a dream about Him again, but the dream doesn't really bother me. How are you doing? I hope you start feeling better. I can't have my baby sick. It makes me sad to see you not feel well.

Well, my psych test is today. First thing in the morning too. Oh well. I think I'll do Ok. I've studied enough to get a passing mark. Wish me luck.

Reply:
With my mother gone, my sweetheart and I are talking more and more every day. I am learning a great deal about her and what could be at the root of her problems.

I am very impressed with my sweetheart. Although school for her is an intolerable chore, she is making a great effort in trying to finish her education. We talk a lot about what she is learning, and she queries me much on what she should think or write about.

I am always amazed that many of the people who go to school take no interest in what they are learning. To them it is just facts, figures, theories and equations. There is a complete lack of connection between their world and the world we teach our youth that lends support to their understanding of reality. The root of this disconnection is definitely found in our inability to understand who we are as individuals, and more importantly who we are as a society.

Many people move through their day without any understanding of what drives them to make certain choices or why they participate in daily rituals. We have become a society that moves through the day without knowing our past, while we stumble forward into an undefined and meaningless future.

02/14/97
Happy Valentines Day, sweetie! How are you doing? I just finished writing my math test and I know I failed. I know I'm beginning to screw up again. But I care for you very much and I'll try to be a better person. As for school, well, I guess I'll just have to do the best I can.

Reply:
Without individual identity it is impossible for the individual to know who he or she really is. In fact, without this crucial cornerstone found within the individual it is impossible for a society or state to have a common base to work from when it comes to morality and ethics. Without an identity clearly defined for a people or a society, there cannot be found any moral or ethical base to build upon. You cannot have a society of lost individuals running around and expect to have any moral or ethical base to work from. Ironically though, if the individual cannot find his or her true identity within, you cannot just force-feed an identity upon them. If you do, you run into the same problem, but from the opposite direction. What is needed is for the individual to know who he or she is through personal experience and thought before one is exposed to any moral or ethical education and definition resounding or residing in society in general.

I think this is one of the great problems my sweetheart faces.

Adopted and raised by parents not of her own race, she is forced into the position of not knowing who she is. It is as if a major pillar of her own identity is missing, and until this pillar can be put into place she will always be unsure of herself and her abilities.

Now that she was 18, we had started talking about going through social services to find her real birth mother. I told her it could be difficult and that we may not be able to find her. I also cautioned her that it was not always personally fulfilling for such a meeting to take place. But I also told her that if we could find her mother we should, since this crisis of identity was a real burden on her soul. Any negatives in my mind would be outweighed by the positives.

03/05/97
Hey, hey, hey! What are you up to. I'm in math class and it's pretty much a spare. Our substitute teacher says we can do whatever we want except leave. So I'm writing you this letter. Most of the grade 10s are doodling on the board. So mature.

This afternoon was pretty boring. In English we worked on Macbeth. In social we worked on social contracts. And in math I'm doing this letter. Everybody's playing s.o.s., or hangman, or X and Os. Sometimes I wish I was younger and with my friends again.

You're doing a really good job on the apartment. I'm very proud of you. Thank-you for providing me with such a good home.

Reply:
I still have not found a better paying job. I'm going to have to find a new job soon. The department store has filed for bankruptcy and has only a few more weeks left before it closes its doors permanently. Since the announcement of its demise I've found that I have more and more time on my hands.

I've decided to repaint the bathroom and put a border around the ceiling.

Da Vinci I'm not, but so far I've gotten more paint on the wall than the floor.

03/17/97
Hi there! How are you? I am in Math class and I'm totally bored. I can't wait for school to end. And there's only 3 ½ months of school left. After, no school for all of summer. However, I still have a whole year left.

On Wednesday it's the winter carnival so I have no school on that day.

Was thinking about you today. It still makes me sad when you call yourself a loser and stuff. Please don't do that.

Bell's gonna ring so I gotta go.

Reply:
We went out for coffee today after I picked her up from school. I always like talking to her. She is the only girl I can really be myself around. Certainly I had other relationships, but they never really seemed to be the right one for me.

In fact the number of girls I have had a real relationship with, before my girlfriend now, could be counted on one finger. I have never had much luck when it comes to finding that special someone to be with.

I know it's my own fault. I have placed too much emphasis on my thoughts, my writing and my endless crusade to help others. But deep down I believe it to be much more than that.

Much of it goes back to when I was young and I decided to make a change in my life that seemed to mark me as an individual or free thinker. I was supposed to go to a certain junior high school but I decided against it and opted for another that was in a different district. Never before that moment had I made a decision that marked me as an individual or someone who was interested in stepping outside the box.

I mention it because shortly after I started in my new school, it did happen that two girls from my old school came to see me at my house. In fact they came for nothing shorter than a full week, everyday trying to convince me I made a mistake and that I should go to the school to which they were going. They said all my friends missed me and many had told them to tell me they felt I had betrayed them and let them down.

As time passed and that week passed into the next and it became clear that I did not change schools, they stopped coming. They never again visited me at my home. In fact, I never again had any real contact with any of the friends with whom I had grown up. But there is a greater point I wish to convey.

Before I changed schools I had always been popular. I had always fit in. I never was at a loss for friends or girlfriends. But ever since I made up my mind to make that change for personal and other reasons (to help someone else), I have been on the outside looking in.

I think that once you make a choice to be an individual you can never go back, even if you want to. I was always sorry my friends felt as they did. I did what I thought was best for myself at the time and for my future. The people I grew up with will always be the most special people in my life. They taught me many of the lessons I needed to know, even at that young of an age. I can only hope, in today's light, they can see they helped me to grow so I could make the decision to move on, no matter how much it hurt me as well as them. For any hurt I caused anyone, I am truly sorry.

As we shared a plate of French fries my girlfriend and I talked openly about our future. In fact it was over our third cup of coffee that she said we should start thinking about our future together in much broader terms. She talked seriously about marriage and how it would be the best thing for us.

I was very grateful that it seemed I wasn't on the outside anymore.

As for marriage, I told her that this was a step that would take a great deal of thought and soul searching on both our parts. In fact it seemed suddenly evident that God was now entering into the debate and the challenge of our relationship. I think the battle to rebuild her soul was entering a new phase.

It is this unresolved understanding of what God is or is not that is another problem for my girlfriend. She was brought up by her adoptive parents in a religion that she sees as foreign, since she comes from a background that has more traditional (natural) views of spirituality. This has left her nothing but to question the very foundation of that Catholic religion as well as her own faith of what could be described as God and His realm of influence and existence

This whole issue of God is quite problematic for me since I have always in my life ignored my own understanding of God, not for any real reason other than I thought it was a question I was not able to fully comprehend. By this I felt I was not intelligent or spiritually gifted enough to contribute to the volumes that have been written about God and the possibility of God's connection to religion.

I think this question of marriage is going to force me to look long and hard at the issues of religion and God.

05/21/97
I know I let you down tonight when I decided to leave and go out for coffee. I was wrong to do that because I promised to be with you tonight. I'm sorry. But to let you know, I didn't enjoy myself. I kept thinking about what I've done, and I'm so sorry. I will never do that again. I hate that feeling of knowing I've disappointed you. I won't go for coffee

for awhile. And I told my girlfriend that this weekend I'm going to spend it with you, like last weekend.

My girlfriend is growing more immature every day. And guess what. When we went to the restaurant for coffee and Shirley Temples tonight, she forgot her wallet at home. We had no money to pay for our stuff. So I drove to her house, got her wallet, and drove back to the restaurant so we could pay for our stuff. Too embarrassing.

I love you to bits. Once again, I'm sorry. Please find it in your heart to forgive me. I love you.

When you told me you might not be able to go to my friend's grad up north, I was crushed. But it's not your fault. I understand the circumstances. But please know that if you don't go, I won't go either. I don't want to be alone at home. So if it turns out that we have to move on that day, then I'll stay and help move. My friends will understand. Ok?

Please wake me when you are finished reading this letter and let me know if you still love me and forgive me.

Reply:
I was very pleased that my girlfriend had found someone who she could be friends. She is more a social creature than I am. It is also nice to see she had a friend similar in age to herself. There are just so many years between me and my girlfriend that it makes some things impossible to understand.

It was during one of her conversations with this friend that they managed to figure out they both had come from the same small town up north. My girlfriend told her what her adoptive name was and to her utter astonishment, her new girlfriend said that was the last name of one of her aunts.

It did not take long before the two were on the phone to the people up north to try and figure out if there was perhaps a real blood connection between them. It did not take long before the two realized they were cousins and that her new friend's mother knew who my girlfriend's real mother was.

It was at the end of this story that my girlfriend told me she had spoken to her real biological mother and the two had agreed to meet.

06/12/97
Hi love! How are you? I'm watching a video on rapists in psychology. It's really graphic and uncensored. Right now some guy is having his fun with some chick.

Anyway, just writing to see how goes it. My hair is <u>really</u> fluffy. I guess my "curling" trick works.

Hope you feel better.

Reply:
Just before we moved into our new apartment, my sweetheart met with her mother.

She spent two days with her mother and the meeting went pretty well. Although she was not like my girlfriend had envisioned, the meeting closed the door to her unknown past.

Like I stated before, identity, if it is not known, will forever pursue those who seek to understand it. Identity is one of the cornerstones to understanding the moral and ethical possibilities of one's own existence. My girlfriend found out who her father was and who her other siblings were.

You cannot go forward without knowing your past. But even if you know your past you must make critical judgments about whether their choices were right or wrong and if you want to be a part of that future.

06/25/97
Hi! How was your day? Mine's going Ok so far. It took me over an hour to get my hair the way I wanted. Anyway, I cleaned what you wanted me to clean.

I wish it wasn't windy. It's going to wreck my hair. Oh well. It's not my graduation. I'm going to leave here about 1:30 p.m. Oh, my application forms are completed so you can drop them off.

I took a few quarters in case I need to call you. Actually, I will call later to see how you are doing. Ok?

I love you.

Reply:
We've just finished moving into our new home. School is nearing an end for the year and my sweetheart is enjoying life more now than she has in a long time, I suspect.

The forms are for her to resume her piano lessons and continue developing the talent for music that she has. She is even considering playing in the upcoming music festival.

I hope she does. A talent likes hers should not be wasted.

07/15/97
Hi. How goes it? I'm doing Ok. I just got back from coffee with my girlfriend. She told me how shitty her grad went. Her mom tried to kill herself in front of her the day after her grad. That's why she wanted to come stay with us a few days. They were up north and her mom got drunk, got into a fight with her husband, and took 43 pills. She had to get her stomach pumped.

For her grad, her family didn't go to the Grand March or even bring a camera. They left her alone at the dance and went to the bar. Nice family, huh?

I'm sorry about Monday. I guess it just wasn't a good day for both of us. I guess I haven't fully understood that music is good and will do a lot for me. I wish you could understand that no matter how hard you try to push me in the right direction, I'll always do something dumb to trip it up. I'll continue with music, but not this week. I'll go for the August classes instead. That's a promise.

I know you try so hard to give me the world. Instead of pushing you away, I should let you help me and guide me. I may look and sometimes act mature, but inside I'm still a little girl who is dependent on people and needs to be loved. As I said to you earlier, you are too hard to walk away from. I love you too much. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me for acting so dumb. I love you.

Reply:
I started a new job this week with one of the major corporations in this country. I now package meat for a living. I am on my way home and I have some time to myself to think.

Things have been looking up for the two of us lately. My new job is full time and the pay is enough so we can afford our new apartment in a better part of town. As for my sweetheart, she is having difficulty with what went on when she met her mother for the first time.

She didn't tell me much about what they talked about but I definitely got the feeling that the meeting had not gone as well as I had hoped. In fact, I think it may have done more harm than good. It is quite possible that what strength of character my girlfriend was looking for from her mother was not there. I also believe the love she was hoping for was also lacking. Sometimes, when you go looking into the past the answers you find are shrouded in the questions of the present and offer little insight into the future.

As I entered the apartment it was eerily quite. Usually there is music playing or the television is on. As I made my way to our bedroom I found my girlfriend passed out on our bed with her wrists slashed. I also found an empty pill bottle next to her.

I tried to wake her and see if I could get her conscious but I couldn't. Wasting no more time, I called the paramedics.

When they arrived the paramedic tried to get a response out of her, but also failed. It was a race against time to get her to the hospital. I followed in the car hoping beyond hope that she would be OK.

08/16/97
Hi. I'm writing to you because I am lonely. I've only been here a few days, and I miss you so much. This place is as boring as I remember it.

Met a guy here. He's really nice. He gave me a poem he wrote. Met another guy too. He's weird, he thinks he's god.

I really don't have much to say. When I see you, we'll talk anyway, so I'll sign off.

Reply:
With my sweetheart in the hospital again, I am on my own. And what do I do when I'm alone? I think. In particular I think about her desire for us to have a Catholic wedding. The issue of marriage, a religious marriage, revolves around one thing and one thing only, and that is the idea of God. In particular my understanding or belief in what God is.

Ever since I was little I have had two distinct and very interesting experiences that have always shaped my view of religion and its possible connection with God. When I was very little my grandparents would take me to church on Sundays when I slept over. They were Ukrainian and went to a Ukrainian-speaking church. The mass was spoken totally in Ukrainian. I, however, did not speak Ukrainian.

At the time, I was young and already had some idea about what religion was from my more English-speaking parents. But there was something about going to mass with my grandparents that always bothered me. The incense gave the ceremony a great sense of the occult and all the great imagery painted on the onion dome ceilings and walls were great.

It all seemed so mystical. And that was the problem. No matter how often I went there with my grandparents, God was never there for me. But in more important terms, in my mind, I could not see God involved in all the ritual and rites that were done here in His name. As the years went on, and attending more masses with my grandparents, I continued to learn about history. I could see how the non-Latin-speaking peasantry of the western world got caught up in religion.

Certainly, if you make it ritualized and have the mass spoken in a language you can't understand, let alone speak, you may feel there is something greater than yourself actually occurring. But that does not give the church the right to manipulate people into believing.

And this was also what bothered me. This idea of having to believe in God is an argument that does not work for me either. Why would God tell us or expect us to show Him our devotion and acknowledgement through specific action? This was the beginning to my speculation that we have misrepresented God, both in terms if His relationship to us and our understanding of what God is.

In my mind either God does exist for everyone, or He doesn't for everyone. In essence He exists for everyone in the same manner or He does not. If it doesn't, as I seem to believe, then God does not belong to religion either.

And that is what I felt as a young person without any bias or true understanding. If God was not with me in a house that was supposed to be His, then He did not exist. Why would God tell us what he liked? It makes no sense.

08/20/97
Your Feelings
and experiences
matter to me
very deeply,
and I'm glad
to be part of them –

sometimes to share,
sometimes to help,
always to understand…

…and always to be there
for you and be your
friend.

I love you

Reply:
As I neared her room I could see she had a visitor. It looked like her aunt who was sister superior for the whole region. I decided I would wait outside her room while the two talked. Seeing the nun with her reminded me again about the issues of religion and God.

This doubting continued even after I began going to an English-speaking Sunday school. The mysticism that I was accustomed to at the Ukrainian church was replaced with misguided logic and half truths. I was being taught Theology and the idea of creation. I think what made me very upset was not that I was being taught a system of belief. To me that is fine. Without such systems and stories our whole civilization would not exist. We must know our history, as our own identity, to know who and what we are. But what bothered me was their idea of creation was being taught as the true and only interpretation of our existence. To make this unsubstantiated claim right, they tie it to the assumption that God was the architect of this story.

This was the second pillar of the church that I found to be woefully unacceptable.

If I was God, why would I communicate my abilities and powers in complete terms and ideas?

For me, personally, God is not defined as something tangible. It would make no sense for something as powerful as God to tell us in great detail how the world was created, what is good and bad, and then let us meander along the rest of the way in misery, suffering and

pain. I guess my definition of God begins with the unknowable. By trying to define what God is we diminish God's existence. That is the other pillar in my mind that is never addressed by any religion. Much of everything beyond the point of human action or inaction is unknowable. It is this unknowable aspect of morality that to me is God.

But this questioning of God's position is much more fundamental than the Church and religion in general allude to.

With the continued progress of science and philosophical investigation, God in my mind has not become smaller in scope and power but much greater.

It is not about rite, ritual and sacrifice. Nor is it about understanding the mind of God, which some pitiful clerics, priests and rabbis think they can perceive. God encompasses everything that we experience. Good and bad. Religion only attributes to God the right and the good. The bad is someone else's fault. In my understanding and belief in God, evil and all the bad things in this world are its fault too. Thus, I guess my mind had been made up. Religion for me has nothing to do with God. It never did.

Now what these two episodes in my life bring me to is a conflict with something that many before me have battled long before I ever stepped into a church. Never in all the books I have read, or all the religious writings I have perused, did God have anything to do with the creation of the church.

This idea of religion and the church is a man-made creation. It is not created by the hand of God. If it was, then religion would solely be in the world to foster the will of God. Nothing else. But as we can all attest to, over our mutual existence from the beginning of recorded time, the Church or the idea of religion has done a lot more than that.

Religion has evolved over time as a system of control that is run by the weak both in mind and soul and is directed outward to these same groups. Those who follow in the footsteps of the pious priest or prophet of any religion will only receive, in the end, the follower's rewards.

God has no connection with religion, nor has God ever from my personal experience. The Church, and for that matter any religion, in the end ignores the fact that God is not ultimate in the idea of the good, but must be equally evil. The idea that God can or did cast out evil to me makes no sense. For in the end God needs evil so it can create good. If evil exists by itself in the world without control and wields a power all to itself, then God must be there every step of the way to correct or counter evil with good. This would mean that God then is playing catch-up. Why would God then be subservient to evil when it is God that is supposed to set the rules. In my mind then, God must be both so he can direct both, in the end ultimately letting God be God, with all the power in all respects. Therefore it needs to be both. God is about that which confines the defined and the undefined. God is both evil and good. Religion is not.

08/27/97
I'm sorry for being a jerk. I still act like a teen sometimes. I know this sounds stupid, but why don't you ever put your foot down? Sometimes I still need a parental figure to set me straight. Even though you are my honey and not my parent, sometimes I do need to be punished. I always tell you not to act like my parents, but sometimes I wish you would. I still wish I was under a parent's rules. On my own, I want to be wild and do dumb things.

By the way, in school records you are my guardian. I didn't tell them to write it. It's just…there.

Anyway, I love you and always will.

Reply:
My sweetheart came home this week and started going to school again. It seemed her mind was still elsewhere but she was giving it a real good try. I tried to pick up her spirits a little with talk about marriage and the fact that I agreed. Considering our relationship and how we felt for each other, it was something that felt right and proper. I talked to her about my concerns over a Catholic ceremony and how I felt a civil ceremony would be just as fulfilling.

She had concrete objections to this. She was brought up Catholic and said her parents and the rest of her immediate adoptive family would be disappointed in her decision not to have a Catholic ceremony.

I knew I was in for a great debate about this. Her adoptive mother had dropped out of seminary school and had forgone life as a nun to marry her adoptive father. Not to mention the fact that she had aunts on both sides of the family who were nuns. In fact one of them was Sister Superior for the whole region in which we lived.

I tried to remind her that she too had some doubts about her religion. There was also the fact that we were living together and other things, which had already trounced at least two of the sacred commandments. Although she agreed, she said she could confess before the ceremony and everything would be alright. She said that was what her religion demanded of her.

She also talked loosely about how it was her duty to her family and her religion to have a Catholic ceremony. I asked her about whether or not my love for her would be true only under a Catholic ceremony. She said no.

She asked me why I had such a problem with a religious ceremony, but I didn't give her an answer and said we should talk about this later since there was no rush.

It was then I realized the great problem about our getting married revolved around the fact I believed in God and she believed in the Catholic Church.

10/16/97
Hi, honey! How's it going? I'm doing Ok. The time is 2:34 am. I can't sleep, so I am writing. I miss you a lot. I hate it here. It smells funny, and the place is so cold. I miss the warm king-size bed at home. But most of all, I miss you.

I hate to admit it, but you were so right about that girlfriend of mine. I should learn to listen to you more often. I can't believe I let myself fall into her clutches. I'm so stupid.

I'm not going to quit school or quit music. I'm tired of not getting anywhere, so I'm going to try again at school + music. I'm not a bad-ass punk, so I'm going to quit trying to be one. I liked it so much better when I was good and tried my best. She succeeded in my downfall, and now I have to pick myself up again. Hopefully I can re-build my good rep. But I'll need your help. Willing to stick by me?

How can I stop myself from being taken advantage of? Why am I so naïve? I'm so mad at myself for letting her do what she did.

I love you, sweet pea. I can't wait to get home to you and make love to you. (I'm such a sex-crazed teen aren't I?)

Anyway, I miss you lots. I think I'll go to sleep now.

Reply:
Although I am on strike with my new job and I have been walking a picket line for the past two months, I have managed to put down more than half the money I owe on my sweetheart's engagement ring.

To do this, I don't necessarily buy everything I need so I can pinch and save enough to have it paid off by Christmas. I plan on proposing on Christmas day.

Even though I have not completely decided on the idea of a Catholic ceremony, I figure I have time to work that out in my mind since I haven't given her the ring just yet.

11/18/97
Hi!! How are you? You look so peaceful and cute just lying there in bed.
I just ate my breakfast of mini wheats and I'm going to get ready to go to school. Another day of lower learning.

Anyhoo, the apartment is still really hot. I thought you said it was supposed to shut off. Oh well.

K, I have to go get ready, so I'll see you at noon. Can I have Beeforoni for lunch?

Reply:
I went to the jewelry store today and put down another payment on her engagement ring. I still am undecided about the idea of a Catholic ceremony. In fact I am still against any

religious ceremony at this point. We have talked a little more about the subject of marriage, but she is still against a civil ceremony.

I told her it would be just as beautiful and enticing as any ceremony we would have with a priest present. But she wouldn't hear of it. She said there wasn't anywhere nice we could hold the ceremony. I told her we could hold it in a park with lots of flowers and everything she wanted.

Although she moved off her foundation a little when I presented this and other credible places other than a church, I could see that if she did not have her wedding in a church the experience was not going to be as fulfilling for her as she wanted that day to be.

As she had always said, she'd always dreamed of a big wedding with lots of friends and family in a church.

The more we talked about marriage, the more obstacles I could see in our path.

I am thinking that maybe we were not meant to get married.

12/03/97
I'm writing because I'm down and out. Why? Just read on and you'll know why.

Besides hating school and my music teacher, life's great. I know I said I was doing good in school, but the truth is, I'm not. I want to stop school and work full time. Does that sound reasonable? I know you did lots to make sure I stay in school, but I'm not happy. I just can't do it. This adult extension class is Ok, but I can't graduate anyway.

And not being able to get enough music students to make a living is no good. But I don't think she understands. All I know is that my music teacher doesn't give me what I need (money).

Reply:
When she opened the present with the ring she cried. It was the first time I had ever seen her cry with tears of happiness.

We had a really good Christmas. To me it was the best Christmas I ever had. It was the first time in a long time that I felt a part of the world again. I was with someone very special and I was willing to spend the rest of my life with her.

As for the issue of marriage, I told her I would partake in a Catholic ceremony if that was what she wanted and if that would make her happy.

Although I was compromising a belief of mine, something I had never done before, I thought the reversal was worth it for her.

01/31/98
Hi! I know you are probably angry at me right now. You have every right to be. Even at 19, I should have enough sense to stay at home with my fiancé when he's not feeling too well.

I shall tell you about my evening. After I picked up my girlfriend we went to that little restaurant I like. She ate supper, and bought me a BLT. After that, we were on our way to the doughnut shop for a coffee. god was there, so we visited with him. After that, I drove them both home, and I came home about 10:45 or so. Now I'm watching TV. And writing. We did not go to the bar. I do have some common sense, y'know.

You must wonder about me sometimes. You must wonder about whether not I care, or if I love you. Y'know what? I do care, and I love you tremendously. I just want to have fun. I'm sorry. I'll never go out again. I'll tell my girlfriend and god that I can't be their friend anymore. You and I will be together 24/7. Well, not when you work or when I go to school. But you know what I mean.

I love you. I'm sorry I hurt you. Again. I guess I'll never learn.

Reply:
There are many problems that are still tearing her up inside. I thought we had turned a corner with our Christmas and the dreams and hopes we spoke about building upon. I though that a concrete future with me would offer her real support in her life and afford her the strength she needs to get over her past.

But ever since Christmas she has become more and more distant from me.

She has been spending more and more time with her friends and staying out late. She is ignoring her schoolwork and neglecting her music.

In fact I think she is returning to her old partying ways. I have smelled alcohol on her breath more than once in the morning this week.

Although I can't prove it, I think she is doing drugs again as well.

03/31/98
Hi. I'm writing this letter because I didn't want to wake you up to tell you. I figured I might as well let you sleep. I just want to talk, so that's why I'm writing.

These past 2-3 weeks have been hell. I feel like I'm getting stressed out. I guess I can't cope too well. I'm even feeling suicidal again, and it's pissing me off.

Do you have any idea how much this music festival is stressing me out? I want to run away, or quit, but I can't. I'm afraid of doing bad, and I'm afraid of doing good. I'm afraid of finding out if I can still play well or not. I'm scared to fail. I'm scared to "show my stuff." Why? I shouldn't be. But I am. And that bites.

Not finding a job is another stressor. You know I try. But I don't think you realize that it bothers me that I can't help with the bills. I want to work to stay busy, but it's not happening. If only I got paid to just play music. I hate hearing you complain about not affording stuff. Especially if I can't pay my half of them bills. It really bothers me.

Another stress factor is listening to you talk about moving here or there or wherever. To me, I feel insecurity about that. I feel like we'll never be settled, comfortable, and happy. My future is unsettled, as well as yours. All I know for sure is that you and I will be wed next year. If we can even afford that. Do you understand? I'm tired of feeling insecure. Will I ever have a secure, safe haven?

And then there's my so-called friends. Within two weeks, I'll be losing two friends. To you, they may be losers, but to me, they're friends. I have so much trouble making decent friends. And as dumb as it may sound to you, I don't want my girlfriend or god to leave. Too many friends have left me. I know it's a part of life. But as you already know, my coping skills aren't worth a shit.

I love you to bits, and I always will. I am so glad you are always there to support me (support group). I need you so much, it's not even funny. Thank-you.

Why won't anyone hire me? What impression do I give people to make them not want me? And why can't I enjoy this music festival? Why don't I have confidence in my music anymore? My music is my security blanket. If I lose that, then what's left? I don't have the brains to pick up a new talent.

Why can't we stay put until we are married? I don't want to move. I know we can't really find jobs here. But quit talking about moving everywhere. Pick a place and stick with it. That's the only reason why I talk about moving back home. You want to move everywhere. I just want to feel safe and secure, and I figure with Mom and Dad is my best bet. Maybe I'm wrong.

My friends are so confusing. One thinks he's God, the other thinks she's Celein Dion, and the other one thinks she's Mother Teresa. But I still see them as friends, and I don't want to lose them. I don't have very many friends.

I don't want you to feel sympathy, or pity, or anything. I just need you to lend a listening ear (eye?) and comforting hug.

Other than those major stressors, I'm <u>worried</u> about that test, my dad's health, your health, my weight, my brother, my looks, my music students, my cat, my dog, money, my watch, wanting to quit smoking, my friends at home, and the list goes on. I don't want to worry. But I can't help it. And I feel like I'm going crazy. Is this how you always feel?

Please help me find a coping skill that doesn't involve cutting my arms or overdosing on pills.

Anyways, thanx for reading this letter. Can I have a hug?

Reply:
The past few days have been quite difficult. My fiancé and I are not talking anymore and we are definitely not listening to each other.

She stays out until all hours of the morning with her friends and that guy she met in the hospital the last time she was there. For the last few nights, I've been sitting up until 3 in the morning waiting for her to come home. I know she is drinking again and possibly doing drugs.

I thought the ring would give her the security she wanted. But I don't think it's meant to be. She's talking more and more about how oppressive I am and how controlling I am. I think she has resolved many of her own internal problems but . . . I can't put my finger on it but something is up with this girl. I know I'm not controlling because I let her do anything she wants, but I think maybe her strength of soul is returning.

She wants to be free to do things on her own and is willing to accept loss once again. I just hope she is ready.

04/01/98
Hi! I love you. No matter what, I'll still marry you, even if we have to live in an apartment for a while.

Reply:
As we were lying in bed tonight my fiancé told me about how she got drunk and stoned at a party the other night with her friends. She said that god was there as well.

She said she wasn't sure, but thinks she might have slept with god.

She asked me if I could forgive her if something like that did happen.

I told her that if she was so out of touch with reality that this did happen it could not be her fault and that of course I could forgive her. This seemed to ease her anxiety.

As she fell asleep, I could only lie awake and think.

What she told me crushed me beyond belief. I loved her so much that I could forgive anything she did except one thing, her sleeping with another. For some reason I did not believe she was so out of her mind that she was not sure she had slept with another. I have seen her on drugs and she has always remembered most, if not all, that happens. Her sleeping with someone else was something that was done consciously and with a great amount of decision.

I could tell that she had been unfaithful. She had talked in such an evasive manner about what has been going on lately, that I knew something was up.

I thought for sure giving her the ring and a promise of marriage, even with a Catholic ceremony would have been enough to satisfy her. I thought this crisis of identity that had consumed her for so long would be resolved with this proposal. But I'm starting to think that maybe the issue of the Catholic Church and the Catholic wedding has more to do with duty to her parents than it does in her faith.

But the more I though about it perhaps this had nothing to do with her identity as a person. Maybe she had healed many of her wounds within her soul. Maybe I've done too good a job. But more importantly I have been so focused on everything that I have ignored what really makes up this girl.

I've overlooked the very essence of what makes this girl exist beyond her own identity.

I've ignored what makes this a vibrant, young, exciting, and dynamic lady that she is . . . in essence her passions.

But, I couldn't marry someone I did not trust.

How could she do this to me after everything I've done for her?

Does the future I so readily envisioned with this girl end sooner rather than later?

Do I continue to help her get over her troubles or end our relationship now?

Damn her. And damn God.

XX4x

05/28/98
Hey there. What's up? Since you are sleeping, I won't wake you up. I'll just write you a letter.

I'm very happy that you got a great job. I'm proud of you. But I'm a little down and out. It's the "moving blues," I guess. I'm just worried that I won't make any friends. And I'm scared to death of having to drive that highway. I'm scared that our new apartment won't work out, and that we'll have to give our new kitten away. She's my new friend. I love her to bits. I don't want to give her away.

I feel sad because I left one home to come here, and I now feel like I'm leaving another home. I feel so unsettled. I'm also worried that I won't find a job. Am I dumb to think that? I love you, and I'll go anywhere with you. I'm just worried I won't adjust well. I'm

scared of getting lost there too. Am I going to make friends? Will there be any tornadoes there?

I feel like a scared little girl. Can I have a hug?

Reply:
I guess the ultimate question left is whether my love for her is great enough and deep enough to help her until she is ready to leave.

I've come to the conclusion that it is.

Call it fate or luck, I've managed to get another job in yet another town. It's a very high salaried job with a seemingly decent company.

I start in three days. We move in two.

I look at this job as a vehicle to an end rather than a means. I want to continue helping my girlfriend. With us moving I will be able to remove her from influential friends who do not have her best interests at heart. I know now she has her strength of soul back, but I want her to live not just as an individual, but an individual who can do so on her own terms.

When put like that, I don't think she is ready yet.

06/06/98
Hey. How are you? I don't get to see you very often. I miss you so much. In fact, I had a good cry today because I miss you. So anyways, I'm writing to you because you are never around for me to talk to.

You asked me today how I was doing mentally. To tell you the truth, I feel like I'm cracking. I haven't been alone so much before, without a car and money. I'm so sad inside. But for you, I'll put on that happy face and trudge on.

Work's ok. I got in shit six times today. I'll tell you about it later. I have tomorrow off. Cool eh? Maybe I can remember what you look like.

I want to sleep alone tonight. Please turn on the dishwasher. Thanks.

Reply:
Our relationship has been different since she asked for forgiveness.

We rarely talk like we used to. I am comfortable with this, but I don't think she is. In fact we don't talk about future plans that often anymore. It was the future that she always looked to for guidance and personal reassurance. And if we do, there isn't that sense of joy and happiness that there once was.

I hope that she begins to view our relationship more in terms of the present than the future. I think it is this kind of focus that will allow me the time I need to figure out how to send her on her way without doing her any damage in the process. I have no idea how to end this relationship without hurting her. If this all ends badly, as it just might, I fear she will bottom out and end up in the hospital again.

I don't like my new job. The workload is tremendous and I can already see that the people for whom I work have a different set of values than I do.
I rarely see my girlfriend anymore. In some ways this works to my advantage. She will have to stop using me as a crutch to get through the day.

06/09/98
Miss you lots. Can you turn on the dishwasher, please?

Had not a too good day at work. After I got home, I had a good cry. My best friend wasn't home for me to talk to.

Anyway, I'm sleeping in the spare room. If you want to talk, wake me up. Otherwise, be quiet!!

Reply:
I know she hates it here. We have a spacious three-bedroom apartment with a fireplace. But she has no friends, and with me needing the car for work she has no way to get around on her own.

On top of that I had to have her parents take the kitten away. No pets in the building I was told.

I hope she doesn't bottom out. It's been nearly half a year since she was in the hospital or tried to seriously hurt herself.

06/16/98
Hi. I had a really bad day at work. I was supposed to have sections tonight, But it didn't happen. My first few tables went ok. But my 4th table was a disaster. I got them the wrong drinks. After that, I accidentally gave one a salad when they weren't suppose to have one. And then, it turns out I had also written their order wrong. They ended up leaving really pissed off, without getting their food. My 8th table was almost the same. However, the people were really nice and patient. But I got no tip. After that the owner took over my tables. I went down to the staff room and had a good cry.

The owner was not impressed. I wasn't either. Oh man. I'm not doing good. Work isn't working out. I'm not adjusting. I'm eating too much. I'm stressing out (although I shouldn't be). Help me. Talk to me. You're never home. I miss you. Do you want me to cry now or later?

Reply:
Whenever I get this many letters and notes I know she is tearing herself up inside.

I watch out to see if she is cutting her arms or legs. I do this when she is asleep, so she doesn't know that I am watching out for her too much, or that I am too intrusive.

She hasn't started hurting herself, so I know she is managing to cope with the stress and my time away from her. I think she is not hurting herself because the battles she now is waging are the ones we all do. Her soul, it would seem, needs not to fight in its own backyard anymore. Her fight is now one that we all must face, one of fitting in and of failure.

I am amazed at her determination and fortitude.

I think my girlfriend is finally turning the corner on her past.

06/17/98
If you are reading this, then I'm probably sleeping or not home. The caretaker just left. He has to replace the entire light switch, and he'll do it tomorrow. So do <u>not</u> use the hallway light at all!

So anyway, turn on the dishwasher before going to bed. Also, if you need paper for your office, take this pad. Ok? I love you!!

Reply:
I think she has weathered the storm. She's talking more and more about how things weren't that great in the town we just left. She said she was even getting tired of the same old eating places and the single shopping mall.

She said the other day that she started talking with her co-workers a little more and that she is finding it a lot easier to talk to people at work.

I wish I had more time for her right now, but work is very time consuming. However, there is an upside to my time away from my girlfriend. For the first time I am beginning to see her in a different light. Now that she no longer needs my help as much, she is in a sense showing me her true identity.

Other than being a fighter, I can see within her a great passion for life. She is complex yet simple as one can be. She craves friendship and companionship. She is once again enjoying her music and her art.

Everyday that goes by I can see a greater love and desire for life in her.

Her passion is slowly showing itself, as is the virtuous side of her personality, something which, when I first met her, did not exist at all.

06/25/98
Words cannot express how much I love you. I am so proud of you. Not just because you are a manager. But also because you are strong, courageous, and have accomplished so much. I'll never be able to do what you've done. But seeing you try so hard and accomplish so much, it makes me want to reach my goals in music. You inspire me a great deal. It may not look like it, but you really do.

I know at times I can be difficult. I do realize that it's hard on you. For that I am truly sorry. I just feel like I've been cheated. How? By not having you around as much, not having a few close friends, moving, etc. I'm beginning to think that maybe I'm being selfish. Maybe I should just step back and take a good look around. Perhaps then I'll see that everything does not revolve around me.

You mean the world to me. It hurts me to see you work so hard at the theatre. So many long hours, so much to do, not enough pay. I wish I were your boss, so I could give you a raise of $600 a week. Or even $700. But I can't.

I know you took this job so you could offer us a better life. And I really do appreciate that. You have always been good to me. However, I don't think I've been as good to you.

I'm sorry that you're sick. That cold didn't choose a good time to come along. I'll do my best to help out around the apartment. I might complain now and then, but hopefully not.

You are my best friend, and soon-to-be husband. I love you with my heart . . . All my heart, and everything else that makes me whole. You're so special it's not funny. And you're not that thin. You have gained some weight. But you have to remember that you are made that way, and I love every bit of you.

Please stay with the job for as long as you can. I'll try harder to find a job.

Hopefully I'll get hired soon.

Anyways, I'm writing this letter to let you know you are loved very much. You are special. And you are #1.

Reply:
Having lost her job, and the fact that she needs to find another is consuming much of her time. I think it is forcing her to think less and less about us. Her resolve to contribute in a positive way to the household is really amazing.

She confronted me today with the idea that she wanted to teach music lessons from the house.

I told her that was a great idea and that I would help put up posters announcing her intentions. I even said we could run an article in the local paper. This really picked up her spirits.

I never did like to see her sad and without a purpose in life.

It seems that her sense of belonging and a possible future allows her to move forward.

Her interest in music and the virtue that it brings is a welcome addition to our lives.

07/05/98
Hi! How was your sleep? I hope your cold goes away. I want you to feel 100%. I like it better when you're A-ok.

I hope you realize that I'm very proud of you. You have awesome management skills that I could never even hope to have. When I see you all dressed up doing your thing, I get all hot and bothered. But anyways, even if people don't see you as a manager, you are still #1 manager in my heart.

Yes, I have to admit that I'm jealous. I know I'm destined to wait tables and have only a few music students. It makes me sad knowing I can't really amount to anything. I'm hoping music will do something for me. But sometimes I even think that my talent is no longer there. So what am I supposed to do?

I'm a little mad knowing that you won't hire me. I'd love to work with/for you. But I also know it's not possible.

I guess I'm frustrated all over again. I really want to do something that will make my family proud of me. But with no experience, no high school, and little brains, I can't do much. My brother is making my family happy, by following the Catholic rules, graduating school, and so on. Sometimes I think my family is embarrassed of me. If not that, then they are probably not proud of me either. And being back on the anti-depressants is probably not a comforting thought for them.

Anyways, this "pity" trip is making me more sad. Can I have a hug?

Reply:
The problems my girlfriend faces, it would seem, are those faced by everyone in this world who loses faith in themselves. But that faith surprisingly is not lost from experience and true failure, but it begins from an unrealistic definition of oneself from without.

We, as a society, offer the youth of our society a plethora of messages that ring empty. In essence we offer them empty virtues. I find it most disturbing that the ancients of this world and in fact many in other ages not so long ago, offered their people virtues with real meaning and substance. From thin and beautiful, to filthy rich, the media today have transfixed themselves and their audience upon hollow and unrealistic values.

The consequences of these messages can be seen in my girlfriend and millions like her who do not fit the message. No one can truly see themselves as being an equal or even at par with what is stated as good and virtuous. The image one is striving for is forever changing and unattainable. In a sense it is the image that is to blame. Ask the anorexic or the bulimic, and the wealthy man or woman, too. More is never enough. Since in television, the magazine and the Internet, more is always shown to be never enough. To them, there is always more to be had.

To me, the viewer and reader have always come before the idea of an editor and his message.

To the majority of the readers and viewers, more has already been attained. And that is all there is.

The message must always represent the viewer or reader. If not, it cannot sit in a just manner to all. If it is not just and right to all, then it will forever ring false and hallow, except to those who perpetuate such a message.

07/05B/98
If you want to know what a tired bunny looks and feels like, take a peek into the spare room. You might catch a glimpse of one.

I miss you a lot. Oh, some guy called for you. He wants to do coffee with you sometime. He's the guy who does movie reviews. Remember him?

Love you. Take a look around the apartment. What do you think?

Reply:
Slowly we are fitting into our new community.

I've bought new furniture for the living room and a few new things for the rest of the apartment. As for the fireplace, we are both dying to try it out.

I've never been very materialistic, but I want to provide her the best possible place to live. I want her to have a nice home, with lots of clothes and lots of food . . .

I love her, and only want her to have the best while she is with me.

But truthfully, I don't really know how much I love her . . .

07/07/98
As I am writing this, you are doing some sort of paperwork. So I'm not going to bother you. I want you to know that I love you to bits. Work's pretty cool. I hope I can keep this job. I really do like prep cooking. It's not all that stressful. Although wearing a hair net sucks.

Do you really think that I'm not really management material? I know I can do it. I just think you don't want me to be better than you. Anyways, one of these days I'm going to look into starting my own music business. Since I was little, I've wanted to do that. And don't tell me that I can't do that either because I know I can. You have a Bad habit of crushing my dreams.

Anyhoo, I'm done being sad now. Hope you are proud of me.

Reply:
She comes to work with me sometimes, but mostly she shows up after she gets off work.

I really enjoy having her near.

I was again thinking about the question of love. Sitting in this projection booth by myself most of the time gives me ample time to think.

I know I love her. She is the only thing in this world I know I really do love. I will do anything for her. I love my mother and I love my farther. But those types of love seem to be one more of duty than anything else.

As for her, it is different. This girl is the greatest joy in my life, although I've known her for only two years. There is something about her that makes me want to do things for her and look out for her. No other person I've ever met has spurned such devotion and feeling.

I know she is special but I really wonder what my love for her really is.

I wonder what are the boundaries of my love for her.

07/09/98
Hi sweetpea! Miss you lots! Did you have an ok night at work? Was your whole day ok? Mine was ok. I'm just tired. My feet and my back hurt. And my hands still smell like food.

An old girlfriend called me. She's back from the west coast. She had hitchhiked there. She went there to look for one of her kids. (Her ex-boyfriend is raising one of their boys). It took her a week to find him. Then she spent several days with him, and took a bus back home.

She wants me to go to the fair with her after I'm done work tomorrow. I told her it depends on how tired and sore I am.

Anyways, dishes are done. Thank-you for 'em smokes and cheeseburgers. They were yummy for my tummy.

Reply:

Although I love her, I know that my love for her is conditional. Since she was unfaithful to me, my love for her didn't stop. But it did become less fulfilling, not because of who she is, but I guess because I think her love for me is conditional as well.

Love is an emotion that for many is the greatest part of life.

We seem to struggle all out lives for some sort of understanding of not only who we are but what it all means. In the end, it is love to which most seem to cling.

07/10/98
Yes. I had not a great day. I didn't screw up or anything. I just had a big list of stuff to do. The storm didn't help any. The power went out. My boss was just going to bring out the candles when it came back on. Then later, on the news it said that 4 funnel clouds were spotted just out of town. That's when I said "where's my hero?" My boss overheard and asked why I said that. So I explained that I was scared of storms, and very terrified of tornadoes. He understood. He said "don't worry. We'll protect you when your man's not here."

Anyway, my list was so big that all 3 cooks had to help. There's no way I'd be done by 5:00. I'd be done by 10:00 or 11:00. And I didn't feel like being on my feet until 11:00 tonight. With 4 of us doing prep, we were done at 5:30.

Anyway, love you to bits.

Reply:
After work today she came by for a while. Again I was too busy to spend time with her so I moved a stool up to the projection booth window and turned the sound on to the movie so she could watch. When the movie was done I went down to make sure everyone left and when I came back she had cleaned up my desk and dusted it as well.

I know she loves and trusts me . . .

And I think I know what love is to me. What I don't know is how she defines love.

07/20/98
Hi. Well, here I am again, writing a letter because I can't actually say words. Anyway here goes.

I want to go to school. Where? Catholic High School. I know I've got my GED already, but I still want to be a paleontologist. And if not that, then I'd like to be a professor in music, or learn business management. My plan is to get what I need in high school, then go to college here for that business thing. So we don't have to move anywhere. I know I have a full-time job. I'm reminded of that every day. But the high school here is a <u>great</u> school. Better than any public schools.

It's better than where we were living. Please? Can I? I want one more shot at high school. I'm only 19. If I were 25, that'd be different. What do you think?? As for work, I have a few ideas that will get me my rent + car paid. I'll let you know later.

Reply:
I think my girlfriend's definition of love is tied into her Catholic beliefs.

The last bastion of religion's power rests in its claim to the idea of love, in particular the Catholic and Protestant Churches' depictions of the man they call Jesus Christ.

Today much of what the name portrays is the idea of love according to its followers. But by doing such a thing we are taking away the greatest human trait by explaining it away upon a higher being or power.

In doing so we are distorting the greatest virtue the human mind and soul may know.

I think her definition of love includes ideas of sacrifice and pain because that is what Jesus went through. And only when this occurs does she feel love. Physical pain, maybe not. Mental pain perhaps.

If she is not suffering in some way, then it is not love. Twisted I know, but that is what the Church and religion in general preach to her.

It is this twisted foundation preached within the books of all religions that must be looked at and more importantly be avoided if one is ever to understand a truly universal foundation for morality and ethics that all humans can espouse to.

I'm not sure but I believe I've helped my girlfriend move away from many of these incongruent parings and preaching's.

But beyond that, I think her definition of love is conditional as well.

Like the idea of God, again we are diminishing the power of that which we ponder. In this instance it is the human capacity to love. According to religion my love does not exist and has no meaning because I do not accept what is taught by the Catholic Church, nor by any other religion on the planet to be more specific.

I know my love for my girlfriend is greater than anything that any religion in today's world can offer in definition or meaning.

My definition of love cannot be taught in some school by a priest, cleric or rabbi.

But despite what they may preach, it does exist.

My idea of love does not include in its definition words like sacrifice and pain, nor ideas such as obedience and servitude.

Love must reside on its own, without interference or linkage from God and religion. Yes it may be conditional, but the importance that it must have in our world must encompass nothing less than anything we can ponder or experience.

In the end, it may be all we have.

08/18/98
As much as I want to sleep with you tonight I can't. You need your sleep. I'll see you tomorrow morning after my appointment. I love you very much, and I hope you have a good sleep. Don't forget to feed Clyde and turn on that nasty dishwasher.

P.S. just leave my chocolate bar on the counter. Well, actually, come wake me up. I want to kiss you good-night.

Reply:
Clyde is the fish that she gave me for our first Christmas.

Thinking back now we both have come a long way.

Over time now I have begun to see we are not that different. In fact we are very much alike, but at opposite ends of the spectrum. We are both two individuals looking for something. She was looking for her identity and a little bit of happiness. I was looking for something or someone to believe in.

The funny thing is, I didn't know it at the time.

She is driven by her passions, I am driven by my belief in reason, each ignoring what the other part our soul is comprised of.

In essence both my girlfriend and I were looking for some sort of moral guidance. But we also needed some sort of ethic by which to live our daily lives.

I guess I'm looking for something on which to hang my hat at the end of the day. I'm looking not only for the meaning of life, but more a meaning that makes sense of my life and my existence on this planet. All I really am is a guy hanging out on a planet.

But there must be more to it than that.

I've already seen that I see right and wrong as having various interpretations. My view of the stolen car as not being bad or wrong places me in the minority in regards to general opinion. And in doing so, I guess that makes me a relativist when it comes to right and wrong.

I know now that the idea of God holds no meaning since in my mind God is as good as it is evil. And unlike what Nietzsche may claim, God is not dead. It's just that we have

misunderstood what God is. Since good and evil need the other to have meaning, in my mind it is impossible for God to throw out the idea of evil as we think God did.

I mean why would God place Itself in a secondary position to evil? It's supposed to be God.

All powerful, all the time.

Therefore, if God is both, basically It's hands tied, there is no allegiance required in heart or mind because It's position is not one of power, but one of just being the executor of time and existence, forever playing the good off the bad and vice-versa.

As for Love, I see it now only as a conditional virtue. Certainly it has great worth, but I feel by it being conditional it offers something less than what we deserve.

Maybe there is something else out there.

But what it is I'm not exactly sure, but I think I'm getting close.

08/20/98
Most of the dishes are done. I just left the two utensils and that pan. Please feed Clyde and put soap in the dishwasher and turn it on. Also, please bring me my Paxil and that white pill.

I didn't have much to do. I completely forgot to vacuum, so I'll do it tomorrow. I promise. I was busy planning our day.

I love you to bits. Please wake me up at 10:00 am.

Reply:
She takes her anti-depressants here and there now. Not very regular. She says they help, but since she does not take them every day, they are not much use.

With everything looking a little clearer now, I was thinking back to what my friend had said about no right and wrong in today's society. The more I think about it, I am beginning to understand what my friend meant when he said that. I now know he was asking a much greater question.

The conversation might probably have diverted into areas of belief and God, with perhaps a side discussion about what constitutes virtue in today's society. I doubt the subject or virtue of love would have come up. But I could have always pondered this point alone. Unfortunately, at the time our coffee break was over and we had to get back to work. Even worse was the fact he went back to school before we could ever finish this great conversation.

If we had, I think it would have ended up at this same point, just as my life has.

To press this conversation further, I am going to explain what I believe is out there for us to hold on to, beyond the notion of right and wrong, above the idea of God, and without the virtue of love forever anchoring us in emotion.

There is, I believe, an intrinsic or natural value that exists between what we are contemplating and the consequences of any action or inaction on our part.

It is this idea of value that we may only in the end place our understanding and meaning to the adventure we call life.

09/12/98

Words of An Unseen Hero
I always see the rainbow
But never that pot of gold
Will I ever be accepted
Before I grow old?

I can never really seem
To please those around me
I try so hard to be the best
But my best is always unseen

Just once I'd like to say
That people are nice and great
But that'll never happen
With such tremendous hate.

Reply:
The worst thing anyone can do in life is hate. Even if one thinks they can control it, or, as someone once said to me, use it as nuclear fuel to accomplish things in life. You lose . . . not just perhaps what you are trying to achieve, but the person will lose as well.

Hate only leads to a diminishing of this idea of value I believe exists out there.

Sure you might accomplish anything with hate as the driving force behind your actions and motives. But really what have you accomplished if you must use force to alter the material world or that of your own inner world.

To truly accomplish anything in this world, it must be done without hate.

I must talk to her about this hate she has, before her soul is absorbed by it.

I have just put it back together, I'm not going to have it torn apart.

09/22/98
Hi! I've gone to work at 4:00. I'm going to sit and have coffee and smoke my wonderful cigarettes. Your mom called. She wants you to bring the roaster when you go get her for supper. Your auntie needs it.

Call me tonight around 9:00. I should be caught up with my dishes and able to talk to you.

How was your trip. I was sad when I couldn't go with you. Wanna try and go see my friend on Sunday?

Well, love you to bits. Have fun cooking bakies.

Reply:
My mother has moved out of her care home and is now living with her sister in the same town we are in. I am so glad to see her travelling and enjoying life.

She deserves the best in life, as does anyone else.

As I have shown, sometimes you have to go to extremes to make a point.

10/05/98
Hi sweetie!! How was work? Well, as I was working on cleaning tonight, I did some major thinking. You do so much for others, and no one even acknowledges it. You go over your limit and then some for others, including me, and no one says boo to you. I understand totally. And I'm so sorry I'm not a better fiancé to you.

In the future, can you please tell me how you're feeling? Just talk to me and say what's on your mind.

I know it seems that I don't listen or even care about how you feel. But I do. It's just that when you're fed up, or sad, or mad, I don't know how to respond to that. You're my solid rock, and seeing you turn squishy mud sometimes just makes me feel uncomfortable. You're always there for me. You're my support group. But how do I be a support group to you? Let me know. Please.

I won't go to the concert. I'll stay home and love you to bits. I know you don't want me to go, so I won't.

Everything is clean except the vacuuming. Oh, and the bathroom floor.

Reply:
I have never found it easy to confide in people. Their advice has never been what I would consider helpful.

I guess it boils down to the fact I have my own moral and ethical code to life, one I hope that is more just and commendable.

It was on this train of thought that I started to wonder seriously about my own idea of help. Maybe I'm not as smart as I think and all the extra things I do are not necessary or for that matter what is needed.

I see I have once again slipped into my world of thinking. I have again forgotten about the fact there is more to life than just reason.

I have forgotten about passion. But this passion is not to be found in my girlfriend.

It struck me today, that although we are still together, we rally are a couple.

I mean we try to be. Or should I say she tries more than I do.

But I don't respond to her advances.

I feel this is about to get messy.

I hope not.

10/22/98
How are you? I'm ok. I'm really tired. I tried to stay up for you, but I can't. Didn't do too much tonight. I took a bath and shaved. However, I did a shitty job. I missed some spots, and now I have slight patches of hair on my legs.

I did the dishes, taught my students, ate lots of Frosted Flakes, and watched TV. I missed you lots.

I don't want to teach my Spanish student anymore. Every time I ask her a question, her dad interrupts and gives her the answer, and most of the time, it's wrong. She's not learning her stuff. She just guesses. And when I ask her the same question a minute later, she's so clueless. What should I do?

Anyway, I love you to bits. Wake me up when you arrive.

Reply:
Christmas is still two months away and I've already received two revised lists of what she wants.

She brought up the subject of our pending marriage again. After a short discussion I agreed to the idea that we should start planning our wedding for next year in the early spring or mid-summer when everyone could attend.

Beyond that, I told her I didn't want to talk about the subject anymore tonight.

11/10/98
I love you very much. I'm really sorry about your Grandma. And I'm also sorry that your job isn't working out. Do you think that it's still better than working at the other job? Well, just writing to say I love you.

Reply:
My father phoned today and told me my grandmother had a stroke. She was in good condition but her life was going to be drastically different now.

I wanted to go and see her but I have been working at this job a few months and I didn't think it was appropriate to ask for time off when I've just really started.

But deep down I know my grandmother can pull through and live on.

There will be another time and day when I visit her again.

12/04/98
Hi. How are you? I'm ok, I guess. Just miss you a lot. I'm sad because now I'll never see you. I'm so pooped at night, I can't go to the theatre with you.

Phoned Dad tonight. He might come on Monday with Mom. I told him about work, and how long I've worked and your "tizzy" with your boss. He laughed.

Thank you very much for my sweater. I love it. When it comes to the "nice" stuff, you have interesting and cool taste. For an old guy.

So, come say good night. Let me know what time to set the alarm for you. Also, I need taxi money.

Reply:
Today the handle of my briefcase broke because it was full of coins that I was carrying from the bank. Since I run a cash business I must keep a lot of coins on hand. And today on the way back from the bank my briefcase broke.

It was originally a gift from my father.

I asked my boss if he would replace my briefcase since I was carrying their money after all.

After a short discussion with his partner they decide that they would not pay for the briefcase. They said I shouldn't have been carrying the money inside in the first place.

I replied that I did it so that people would not know I'm carrying around hundreds of dollars at a time.

He said that I should just conceal it in another way. When pressed as to how, he told me that I should figure it out.

While looking for another briefcase that afternoon, I realized I couldn't find one as nice as the one my father had given me. Sure there were many to choose from, hundreds of design and colors. But it just wasn't the same. It was then that I realized it was the value the briefcase held that I would never find again.

Walking to my car with the new briefcase, I began to understand more about this idea of value. It is a little similar to the normal idea of value that has been taught before but in a way it is very drastic.

My idea of value begins not so much with what we say something is worth, but worth we can bring to this world and the things in it.

As an example, to my boss the briefcase that broke was just a piece of leather held together with binding. To me it had sentimental value because it was given as a present by my father. But . . .

When we are placing value on our actions, it is this type of subjective valuation by which we err. My idea of value is a quality, it is meaning, it is . . . objective.

12/17/98
Hi! How are you? I'm ok. I'm sleeping. How was work? I didn't do too much. I watched TV, did the dishes, and worked on my dream catcher. Then went to sleep.

Mom is so annoying. She is still trying to be controlling. Why can't she be just a mom (like your mom)? She makes my life seem so silly and that everything I do is wrong.

Is it true that I am not supportive? I try to be. But I don't know how to be supportive to you. You're my stability, love friend, soul mate, etc. But I don't know how to be all that for you. Tell me. Now!

I hope work was ok. Was it hard watching that platter all night? Tell me about it later.

Reply:
Christmas came and went this year. I made sure she had a great Christmas with lots of presents. The money I am making made buying her all the things she wanted a lot easier.

It was a little disappointing for me. Last Christmas seemed so promising, and now every time she brings up the subject of our enduring engagement and the date for our wedding, I keep changing the subject.

I was thinking maybe I was prolonging this relationship for myself. I know I need her and the love she gives me. And I liked being a part of the world.

But I know in my heart there is no future for me with this girl.

If I am going to break up with her and have her move on without undoing all the progress she has made, I am going to have to make her not love me so much.

I guess I have to change into someone she might not want to be with. But at this point I really have no idea what this means.

Or who I might have to become.

XX5x

01/09/99
I sit watching you. Typing away and working hard creating what could be one of the most powerful books of our time. You look so sexy.
Even though I diss your book, I know that it's one of the best things I'll ever know about. I don't mean what I say. I'm just mad because I can't watch TV.

Reply:
I'm working on volume one of my philosophical thoughts. I have worked and thought about "Politics" for about 15 years. I hope when it is done that something worthwhile will be presented to the world.

I just don't understand people today. They just are not interested in philosophy.

If Plato or Aristotle were alive today, I am sure they would not have made the New York Times best-sellers list. In fact I am sure their work and the essence of what it conveyed would all but have been ignored.

Philosophy is one of the greatest things we may ever embark on as human beings. The prevailing sentiment about philosophy was summed up the other day by someone who suggested philosophy was nothing more than my opinion.

I thought about that for a moment and realized that philosophy was something much greater than that. It is in fact a level of understanding and experience. It really has nothing at all to do with opinion.

It broadens one's horizons intellectually and emotionally.

Philosophy is like art, it conveys a message about one's time and one's place in that time.

In fact I don't think I would have been able to help my girlfriend get this far if it was not for philosophy.

But with all that said, I completely understand my girlfriend's frustration. Even thought we have three bedrooms, I ended up putting the computer in the living room next to the television.

Maybe that wasn't such a great idea.

01/19/99
My friend wants to take me out for coffee. I'll be back by 9:30 – 10:00. Wanna go for coffee after? Or will you be too tired.

Man, I am so embarrassed. If I need surgery, I'll never forget my 20th birthday. And whether I want to or not, next week I have to see the doctor. Doctor's order. Well, next week or the week after. If I wasn't sexually active, I wouldn't have to. So that's your fault too. She also advised that I go see the gyno this year.

Oh yeah. My ears have fluid in them, but they're not infected. She said they'll clear up within the week.

She also said I need to lose 53 pounds, and quit smoking to be healthy. I can't believe I weigh so much. She said my weight was related to my heart problems. It's not serious now, but it could be. She'd rather I lose weight and quit smoking instead of continuing to have heart pains. So will you help me?

Anyway, gotta go.

Reply:
It's amazing how much I love my girlfriend.

Sometimes she has great trouble breathing. She looks in such pain that I begin to panic. I almost called the ambulance once. I panic because there is nothing I can do for her and that makes me feel powerless. As quickly as the pain comes, it goes.

Then she's fine again.

My love for this young lady may be conditional. But it does run very deep through me.

01/21/99
Hi! How's it going? How was work? My day at work was shitty. My boss made me cry. That's why I wanted to quit. She made me feel so useless. She kept moving me from place to place today, and talked to me like I was a two-year-old.

But other than that, everything's ok. Didn't go for coffee. Instead my friends and I went to a guy's house. Bad move. This "friend" smoked so much damn pot while we were there. Not only that, he has a 2-year-old kid. I hated the way this guy talked to his son, and swore and smoked pot with this kid on his lap. It was shitty. Then the guy's girlfriend came home, and while they got stoned, the kid sat in his little Elmo chair and cried.

Broke my heart. Calling a 2-year-old kid "a little Fucker" is not my idea of good Family values.

Going to bed now. See you whenever. My next day off is Jan. 29th. I work 11 days straight, with most of them 8 hour shifts. I'm gonna be so tired!! Well. Gotta go to bed.

Reply:
We talked about this incident involving the little boy today. We agreed that his upbringing was wrong and his parents were not suitable and up to the job. This brought us to the subject of someday having children and how we would raise them.

Not surprising, this led to the conversation of our wedding this summer.

I told her that we should look into cancelling the date once again since money was tight and I didn't think we would be able to save enough for the kind of wedding she wanted.

When I suggested this, I could see in her eyes that her patience about the wedding was all but gone. It has already been more than a year and we have postponed the date more than once.

I think she's starting to feel that the wedding is not going to happen. She was also having trouble saving money. Her job and the few music students she had each week weren't enough to cover even her half of the bills.

We agreed that we would talk later about setting a new date.

Again.

02/16/99
You really don't understand do you? I'm not happy! Why? Because when you come home from work, you don't rush to hug me like you always do. And when you phone me, you are always preoccupied with something. I want you home for evenings. I want you to go to a movie as a regular paying customer, not a manager. I want to have sex on a regular basis. Since I turned 20, I have been thinking about other guys. I love you, but I hate your boss and your job. It's not normal for a fiancé to wonder about other guys and actually want to be with them. I can't help it. I want to be yours, and only yours. But what does one do with odd feelings.

I want to be thin. I want to please you by being the perfect housewife, but I'm so lazy and have no motivation. And believe it or not, I do want to cook and clean for you. (But I hate undoing your socks to wash them.) My logic is, my whole attitude and ways of doing things will change once I'm thin. I know that sounds dumb, but it's my logic.

I love you to bits, but you don't like it when I get sex on the brain all the time. What's a girl to do? Anyway, if you still love me, come hug me.

Reply:
I was thinking about her letter today and I realized that I've been so preoccupied with work, the ethics of our relationship and how she is handling her problems, that for the first time I came to the realization she *is* going to leave me some day.

A great feeling of loneliness swept over me. What would I do without the person I love with all my heart and who brings great joy to my life?

I do not know.

But the more I think about it, I understand I am not the one for her. I tried very hard to make her happy but it wasn't enough. We may have needed each other at one time, but I don't think that will last much longer. I've realized I don't have to do much to get her annoyed at me. And the fact that she is starting to have a wandering eye seems to tell me she will leave me when she is ready and on her own terms.

Maybe I won't have to change too much and I'll just sit back and see what happens.

03/04/99
Hi! Can you please mail this letter today? I know you'll be busy all day, but can you? It needs a stamp. And stuff.

How'd you sleep? I slept shitty. Came to bed at 3:00, and you snored. So I ended up getting up and staying up till now (5:30 am). After I'm done this letter, I'll try to sleep again. Good thing I'm up though. I forgot to turn the dishwasher on 'till now.

Finally got the courage to write to Her parents. I hope they write back. If they do, I can be happy because then I'll know that they're ok. Think it's a bad idea, though? I hope not. I haven't written to them since that day. I hope three years wasn't too long to wait to write.

I hope you have a good day at work. I know I'll only see you for an hour today, but I'll always be thinking of you. My sexy one. Ruff!!

Can you leave me $10 (well $12) for that music book? I <u>have</u> to get it today. Hopefully you'll have enough time to bring me to the music store. That's why I want to eat Italian, or go for hamburgers, or even Chinese. That way, if we eat close to the store, we won't have to waste time running from one end of the city to the other to buy my book.

Anyhoo, love you to bits. Hope you aren't sore from our "mishap" last night. You're just so ruffable!

Reply:
I could not believe she mustered together the courage to write to Her parents.

In my mind this is a tremendous leap forward for her. She has put behind the most trying time of her young life and accepted the reality of a world that is not always understandable.

I believe she is slowly developing a moral and ethical code that will bring her happiness.

I'm so proud of her.

03/22/99
Hi! How's it going? Was your sleep ok? The time is 3:05 am. I'll be in bed right away to join you.

I am writing because I feel bad. I hate giving your ring back to you when we have a spat. But it's the only way I know to react when you are winning our fights! And I know it gets to you. I love you tremendously, and just so you know, my love for you is not stopped that easily. Even if I huck the ring at you and stomp away while screaming "I'm gonna leave you!" I don't think I ever will. You mean way too much to me.

Every day you prove your love to me in many ways. How can you love me so much? I'm just me. I love you to bits too, but I don't know how to show my love. I'm always grouchy and I seem to piss you off a lot with my messes. (mess monster). I can't show love as well as you do. If you ever feel neglected, let me know. I'm not a complete one-celled ameba. Sometimes I know.

I want to apologize for being "so difficult." It's just that I feel like you're trying to change me into someone like you. I just wanna be sweets, with the homeless bitch look. Can't you just accept that? Dressing nice all the time makes me feel funny. Anyway, I tried to order the jacket just now, and <u>It's Not Available</u>. It hasn't been for almost a month! So, to make you happy, wanna help me pick another jacket that meets your approval?

If you like that idea of another coat, and that you forgive me, come hug me. If you don't like the idea and don't forgive me, come hug me anyway. Your hugs are special to me.

Reply:
With the argument we had today, it was the first time in our relationship that she took off her ring and gave it back to me.

I think she is slowly separating herself from me. In the end I asked her to put it back on her finger. With a little hesitation she did.

There is still some commitment to me left within her soul. I think her virtuous side has gained supremacy over her passions and reason. I think she stays with me now, not out of love but a sense of duty.

I know she is not happy, and she tries to find happiness in our relationship. But she has in a way outgrown me. Yet she does not have the confidence to go her own way.

04/19/99
Hi! Since I felt really bad for not having the housework done, I did it before going to bed. I dusted, swept and washed the kitchen floor, and cleaned the bathroom. All that I have left is to vacuum and your socks. And windex the coffee table. All done before 2:30 am. Enough time to catch some z's!

Reply:
More and more each day she gives up a little more on our relationship and spends that time with her friends. She is also throwing herself into her work at the restaurant, so much so that she earned employee of the month.

Her independence is slowly shaping her thoughts and desires.

We don't talk very often anymore and I find myself working more and more in my mind, consumed by my thoughts.

05/07/99
Hi. Have a good sleep? How do you feel? I just figured out how much money I'm getting from my music students. And it is not as much as I thought. I am only getting a mere $130. So, with that $12 you own me, plus $18 from my friend, $4.50 from the crafter's Market, and the $12 I have on me now, you'll receive about $180. I'm going to give you what I'm supposed to keep for myself. I also have another $10 in my bank account that I can give you, so you'll have $190. It's not $200, but since that's what you need, I'll sacrifice my money and give it to you. I love you to bits. I'll buy my own stuff another time.

Reply:
Today I found myself embroiled in a conversation with my boss and his partner. They were discussing the fact the government had changed the law so that every person working was to be paid minimum wage. The original law stated that those under the age of 18 or those who were students could be paid a lower wage.

The two were very displeased since this was going to cost them more in employee wages.

I did not give my opinion since this was a conversation between the two of them, but I wondered if they realized what they were implying. By placing such a distinction, they were unfairly and in a broader sense treating individuals and their work in an unequal measure. In effect, they were saying the labor of one individual is less than another, simply because they were different. They were making a value judgment of labor and effort based upon profit.

I did not ask, but I wondered if they felt the labor of their own children was less valuable as they claim everyone else's child to be?

But it was this issue of value that had been consuming me for some time now and this was an excellent example I think about what we miss regarding the moral and ethical black hole we find ourselves in today.

The problem is that we value objects, things, and even people. But maybe it's the other way around. Maybe it's a value that we bring to the table, not one that we decide upon that matters, in particular when we are discussing value in terms of human beings.

I think it is this type of definition concerning value I must learn to understand and explore more, especially in how it shapes the reason behind my help toward my girlfriend.

05/18/99
Hi! How did you sleep? No doubt when you read this, I'll be sleeping. As usual. Anyway, I am writing this because I am lonely. I watched a movie called "When A stranger Calls Back." Freaked me out because it was a horror. Almost screamed once when Clyde made a loud noise beside me. I felt like running to you for a hug, but I didn't want to wake you up.

I know you miss me when you go to bed without me. So I'll try to go to bed when you do from now on. I like cuddling with you, but I can't sleep at night. So I'll just stay with you at night until you fall asleep, and then I'll go watch TV or do whatever.

You're so cute. I forgot to give you your supper hug last night. *HUGS*. And I promise not to "take" more money from you. I just wish I had my own money to spend. Maybe one day we'll be rich and stuff.

I feel sad because you are working hard to keep me happy. I've noticed it. And I thank you very much. Just wish you could laze around with me. Will you ever be able to? I hope so. Get fat and lazy with me.

What time will you be home today? And you's gotta work tonite, right? Gee…that's sad. I was mad at first when you refused that other job. But after I thought about it, I realized where you were coming from, and now I agree.

School sucks. Just had to say that. Well, I'm tired. Time to join you in bed.

Reply:
Since that last conversation with my boss, I've been giving more thought to the meaning of value and how one could go about understanding it.

I don't think you can give it an absolute quality. It's not like trying to determine an international currency, like the all-powerful American dollar. Much of the world's finances are calculated in terms of the dollar. It is respected and its value is the determining factor in the worth of anything that is used in the world of finance.

But I don't think we can determine this greater idea of value that I speak about in the same way through this combination of governmental fiat and social acceptance.

The idea of value that I talk about is something much larger.

When we talk about right and wrong, good and bad, we are talking about a set of values we use to live our lives by. This standard exists so that we can live in a co-existent society in relative peace and harmony. In essence morality and ethics exist so we can build a civilization that can in one sense or another progress further.

But the problem is that the individual suffers when we are bound to a set of artificial moral and ethical standards that subvert the existence of the individual. What civilization demands may not necessarily be what the individual needs.

I mean we only have a certain amount of time on this planet. So much that has been written and spoken about seems to create a sense of nothingness when it comes to existence. Even in my journey I have found morality, ethics and even God to be nothing but empty ideas.

But life cannot be just something devoid of fulfillment and in particular meaning.

Perhaps it is not in morality and ethics that we find meaning to our lives or how we should lead them.

I think it is in this redefinition or realignment of the idea of value that we must look upon not so much for guidance but individual meaning.

For in the end it is meaning that makes sense of life.

06/02/99
Hi. The reason I am writing this is because I got an insane idea last night. What if I started my own business in town here? Half music store, half craft store because there aren't a heck a lot of them here. Then I could sell music stuff (better than the music store here now), and craft supplies.

If I can do this…Then how can I get started? What do I need to start, and what do I need to know? Please tell me. Besides money, what else? I really want to do this…since you don't want me to become an actress. Then we could just settle here permanently. So…whenever I manage to wake up today, please…can we talk about this? Seriously? I am very serious about this.
P.S.
We just broke a 3-year tradition. We haven't moved! Every June 1 or 3 we move. Remember that?

Reply:
Her desires and her wants never seem to end. And most interestingly enough, rarely am I ever a part of these wishes of hers. One day it's a music store that sells crafts, the next day she wants to go to school to learn how to be a cook.

From her perspective the sky is the limit.

And for any individual and us as a species, that is the key. Our potential is limitless. It all depends on what the system and out abilities will allow.

I also think it is with this potential as an individual that we can find my idea of value.

06/09/99
I find it amazing that I can write you so many letters and stuff, but you don't write me nothing. But that's ok I guess.

You must wonder about me. I mean, I write so many notes and letters about how much I love you, yet I don't seem to show it, do I? But trust me…I love you to bits. My little eye may wander sometimes, but it's like one of them boomerangs. It always comes back to you. Sure…other guys may look like studs, but their personality may just suck. My heart is yours. Always and forever.

So. Because I love you to bits, I'm going to go to sleep with you every night. I know I said that before, but I'm hoping I can actually do it this time. So…I'm gonna quit babbling here, and join you in bed!

Reply:
I think when she lies down beside me I must repulse her in numerous ways.

Like living with your parents, you cannot wait to enter the world on your own. I believe that is where she sits now.

I wish I knew what she was thinking deep down in her soul. Maybe if I did I might be able to help her break away from me.

Duty can have the same powerful effect upon one's will as any emotion that one can find in the soul. I only hope that by hanging on to me too long she does not revert back into her old cycle of self-mutilation and depression.

I've always noticed that when she feels trapped, emotionally and to a certain extent psychologically, she hurts herself.

This perhaps may be the beginning of the most trying time of our relationship yet.

06/19/99
For the last three years, I've been living with you. We've had good times. And also had bad times. But for some reason…I sometimes just don't care. He treats me right and all…but I don't know if I love him. I feel sorry for him. But where does love come in? Everyday I feel guilty. In the back of my mind, my Catholic religion screams at me, telling me that I'm a bad person for living with a guy and not being married. Now I find myself wishing I was single, so I could do everything I want, like acting, or even Radway. I think he doesn't understand that I'm only 20 and I want to see the world. He's done everything and now wants to relax. I want to have fun because my life is just starting. Our age difference does matter. I want someone who wants to see the world with me. I don't need a "parent" to shout down my ideas. I want to try everything and see everything. I mean, aren't I entitled to my own thoughts and be risky, foolish, and adventurous if I want? Just because he's "been there, done that," it don't mean I have to follow his example. I hate the way he thinks I'm so stupid sometimes. I mean, how am I supposed to learn and understand anything if I can't experience or try it myself? I have no idea what my future is, and I want to experience stuff to see if that's what I wanna be, and what I like. I mean, honestly. I'm young. I'm suppose to be silly and do foolish things. Damn it.

I also think we rushed our relationship way too fast. I wish I could go back and change that. I love being on my own…but I don't love living with another parent.

And then there's that religion issue. I need a mate who can support me spiritually. Someone to pray with. Someone to do the church scene with. Someone who I can talk about God with. You and I can't really relate because you don't believe in any of that stuff. (I want a Catholic wedding, and a Catholic marriage.)

Then there's that crazy side of me. You work too much to have fun with me. He'd never go dancing in the Bar. He'd never go "dancing in the rain." He'd never go skating with me. He'd never sit on the balcony until early morning with me to watch the sun come up. He'd never have a food fight with me.

He's too worried about his "stuffed shirt" image. I'm so sick and tired of having people tell me that he's too uptight and needs to relax. His abrupt attitude around people makes them laugh at him. I can't stick up for him forever. I used to understand where he was coming from. Now I'm as clueless as the rest of them.

The way I feel about myself is another problem. Of course I blame you…But it's all my fault. My weight….my face…all my fault. When I'm with you, I feel so self-conscious because he's so skinny. When I'm lonely, I eat. It makes me superior to the food. I control it. It can't fight back. It can't laugh at me. That's why I love my animals. They don't care how I look. They are great listeners. They don't scoff at my crazy ideas. They don't care about "image." They don't use big words. They don't offer empty advice.

All that war + news crap. I realize that war is very serious. But I can't do nothing about it, so why should I freak out? If I had the power to stop all wars, I most certainly would. But I don't have the power like Milosovic or Clinton. I'm just me.

I wish I could start over. But I'm stuck here. I'm stuck in a no-win situation where I can't be who I want to be. I love leather + vinyl. But of course you, your stupid "image" does not allow it. I want the tattoos. I want the black clothes. I want the colored hair and damn it, I want the nose ring. He figures I'm just a rebel wannabe. Fuck that. He says I don't suit the look. Who gives a shit??! I like the look, and if others don't like it, then they can lump it. He's got this stupid saying when I try to be comfy. He always says "bitch attitude" whenever I wear black or my so-called fake leather. He don't understand that some days, I need to be who and what I feel.

I always call him names and swear because he's the most aggravating person I know. He always assumes he's right, or that he's so smart. Well, if he's so smart, he'd realize that I'm hurtin' right now. He would realize that I'm a young female wanting to see the world and do stuff just for the hell of it. He'd realize that he can't fulfill all my needs + wants. He'd realize that I'm who I am, and he can't change that.

I wish so much some days that we could just end it and go our separate ways. But I need companionship. He does know I probably wouldn't make it in this world alone. So why should I bother being in it? If I'm so stupid, useless, and foolhardy, why should I even try to struggle through life.

Sure, I may be good in music. But it's not what I want to do. I'm so sick of music. I want to do acting…or something cool like painting. He just doesn't get it.

By writing my thoughts down, it makes me realize how pathetic I am, and how much I hate life. But who can I talk to? All I have is this pencil + paper to hear my thoughts and feel my feelings. Who out there can actually care about me?

Reply:

Wow.

I understand her discontent completely. To her I am no longer the mate or the boyfriend she asked out 3 years ago.

I am the parent . . . the parent she no longer needs for advice and comfort, or more importantly security.

Like a writer slowly crafting their skills through years of practice to find their voice, she has finally found hers. Yet she stops herself at the last moment. Almost ready to move on, her soul and spirit searching and reaching for the sky, she holds back because of me.

Before I was the pillar of her happiness, now I am the obstacle to that happiness.

I thought that by becoming less attentive and supportive it would be enough to break the tie that binds us together.

It would seem that it is not.

I don't know what to do.

07/24/99
The time is exactly 2:15 am. I just cut my nice long nails off because I know I gotta start the music again. Now I'm sad because I hate cutting my nails. Took almost 3 months to get the length they were. * sigh * oh well. It's a sacrifice that concert musicians make!!

How 'ya doing? I just wanna say no matter how much I wanna go to the fair in the city, I know we really can't. I'd rather spend a night with you and get new clothes. Is that ok? There's always next year and stuff.

Just tried to scratch myself. Forgot already!! Anyhoo…see you in the morning!

Reply:
My father phoned today to tell me that my Grandmother had another heart attack this morning.

He said he could not take care of her anymore and that he was going to have to put her in a home. He said her health was failing and that I should think about making a trip to see her before she passed on.

He said it would mean a lot to her to see me one more time.

08/27/99
Hi! How are you? I'm doing ok. Just waiting for my friend to hurry the hell up. After we had coffee at the corner restaurant, we went to the mall. I bought some lace to make pretty crafts and stuff. It was lots cheaper than at the other place.

We'll be at the bar tonight. Wish you were there too.

The time is about 11:00 pm. We're heading out the door.

Reply:
Since she gave me the note she is spending more and more time with her friends and even less time with me.

She never comes to the theatre to be with me anymore. Nor do we eat all our meals together as we once did.

I was giving great thought to the fact that she is still willing to stay with me despite her unhappiness with her life and our relationship. I was thinking that perhaps I would have to take the drastic step of leaving her.

Perhaps that would be the only way for her to move on.

09/17/99
Hi honey! How was work? Life here was pretty boring tonight. All I did was watch tv, fool around on the piano, flip through a bridal magazine, wash dishes, clean the bathroom, and straighten the living room. I've got the clock in my room. I'll get you up at 9:45 or so. Then I'll take off for work at 10:00. I'll be done at 2, but I'm gonna stick around after to chat with the others.

After, tomorrow, I'm going to finish cleaning the house ok? If you'd like. Come say good night. I wouldn't mind being awakened by my handsome prince.

Reply:
After more thought I decided that I would not be the one to leave.

And it boils down to the idea of value that I now all but understand.

In the grand scheme of things I may be viewed as a horrible person for the deceit and lies I've told to keep our relationship together. But those lies and deceit were necessary to fulfill the value that lies at the heart of this relationship. Not to mention the value of that young lady that I so dearly love.

I am helping her not to be her prince, but I am helping her to understand and live life. When I met her she was just a shell of what she was and could be. No one at such a young age should see their life in terms of its end.

It's only really just the beginning.

I want her to live life and experience everything that life offers – even the bad, although she has had more than her share of that.

I want her to be a mother and I want her to be a wife. I want her to travel and do everything else she wants to do. I know I cannot give her these things. But what I think I can do is give her the right opportunity to begin her journey down a path in which she can experience all these things and much more.

But it is not that I want her to have things from these experiences, but I want her to give.

Value is not about what we can take from life, but what we can give.

It is only within this definition of value and an understanding from this perspective, that we accept this as being important in our lives.

Value begins with us, and is only limited in its definition by our potential.

In my mind our pursuit and our ability to fulfill all the possible meanings and definitions found within this idea of value is how we as individuals and a species should be judged.

In my mind it is our responsibility to help everyone we can, attain and strive for the value that exists in their life.

And that is why I will not leave. If I leave it will not add to or help in her reaching her potential as an individual. I believe it will, due to her past, only reinforce in her mind that she has nothing to offer this world, thus ultimately undoing all the progress she has made so far.

She must move on when she is ready.

09/25/99
How are you? I'm really tired. Here's the list of stuff I did tonight.

-cleaned the bathroom
-vacuumed (check out the base boards. I figured out how to use the attachments)
-washed the kitchen floor
-dishes
-made the beds
-cleaned the living room
-dusted

Sorry for being so abrupt on the phone, but I was trying to clean stuff to surprise you. My mom phoned and we talked for 45 minutes. We chatted about relatives, kids, college, and you. Even after three years, my mom still has her reservations for you. I straightened her out on stuff. She thought you were a moocher. I said that you were supporting me. Then she said that she hopes we don't have kids before we're married. Then I said we wanted to get married in October, and she asked me if I knew what I was doing. I almost hung up on her because she was making me mad. But we chilled and ended the phone call on a happy note.

I am really tired now. Leave money for a cab. And don't wake me up. I'm zonked out, ok?

Reply:
Some parents today have missed the mark when it comes to bringing up their children. It is their responsibility to ensure the child is well prepared to tackle the world.

In particular to this discussion, they set the groundwork for the potential their child may strive to fulfill. If the child is ill prepared, then the value one may bring to this life is less than what may be possible. But it is not only the child that suffers but society as well.

For us to move forward as a species it is imperative that we exert ourselves to our outmost potential.

Without it, our civilization, like the individual, will become sick and filled with self-loathing.

10/31/99
Hi. How was your sleep? It just dawned on me that you did the dishes. Thank you. You didn't have to. I'll do your dishes today since you've done them for me twice.

You don't have to pay me back for anything. It's only $68. Just make sure I enjoy my trip to your hometown. Besides…I kinda like buying you stuff. It's like I get to take care of you for once.

I'm grumpy these days of my weight and because no matter how hard I try to make friends, I can't seem to do it. People at work are nice and everything. But I just don't seem to click with them. Maybe I'll make friends at my new job.

Work is not making me depressed. It makes me mad because I hate having people tell me what to do. I hate waiting for paychecks, and I hate dealing with stupid customers. I love meeting people my age, and getting the experience. But I still hate being told what to do. And getting sore hips and feet.

I'm also mad because I'm broke, and I don't know how to make more, or stretch my paychecks. How do you do it? Can you explain it please?

Anyhoo. See you when I decide to fall out of bed. And I'm sorry for being so grumpy all the time, and being rude to you.

Reply:
This time when we went to my hometown, we did not hold hands all the way. In fact we didn't hold hands at all.

We went to see Grandmother. Again my father phoned and told me she was in failing health. She was moved into the home for the elderly, and I heard from my father that she doesn't like it there.

As we neared my grandmother's room my girlfriend said I should go first. She said it would be a great surprise and that she did not want to interfere with our reunion.

As I entered, I saw her sitting in a chair all by herself. She was staring at the floor and thinking. I could see by the expression on her face she was contemplating the 92 years of experience that was her life.

As I watched her I did some thinking of my own. With everything I have been through and thought about these past few years, all the remarkable twists and turns of this life, it gave me great pause to reflect.

Good and bad, right and wrong, we struggle all our lives with these things. Throw love and God in there and everything just ends up looking like one big enigma.

But I have found there is something to hang one's hat on at the end of the day and I owe it all to my girlfriend. No, my best friend.

In the end it is not a matter of recounting all the good things we did against all the bad things we remember to see if they balance out or tip over one way or the other. But beyond even that, who are we to judge another's actions or inactions as right and wrong, good or bad, when we in clear conscience at the end of our life do not know these things for ourselves? Can we ever know if we did the right thing at the right time or were all our efforts destined to be wrong?

Nor is it about God. For as I see it, God is only waiting at the end of one's life for one to die, so God can replace me with another to fulfill and continue the cycle that was set in motion so long ago. God is not there to hear my pain nor my confession. God is too busy balancing the world so that it can continue on.

Finally my grandmother realized someone was there and she looked up.

When she realized it was her only grandchild, her eyes lit up and a great look of joy and love blew into her face.

I gave her a great big hug.

In the end love is there, but it's not the only thing. So is my idea of value.

I don't think my grandmother was thinking about what she did right, or whether or not God was there listening to her. I think she was thinking about her life and what she had done. Not what she took, but what she had given. She was thinking about the value her life had.

And in the end, that is where we should focus.

Not what we took from this life, but what we gave. And did we give as much as we could in all respects.

For when it comes down to it, we all end up in that chair and it must be worth something.

XX6x

03/22/00
Hi love. How are you? I'm sorry I stayed out so late. Me and my friend were having too much fun. We stayed at the all-night eatery until 1:30 am, then we walked around for a bit. Then we went to her house and just chatted and played with Frank and Beans. Now it's 3:30 and I just got here.

You are probably wondering about the hat. I won it at a game at the eatery. I put a coin in the machine, and maneuvered claws around. I wanted a stuffed animal, but got the hat instead. Oh well.

Anyhoo, I am tired, and wanna sleep. So see you tomorrow.

Reply:
Christmas came and went with many presents again.

This New Year was the celebration of the millennium but we spent it apart. I had to work because of concerns over power outages and all the Y2K stuff. She went to a party with her friends and I stayed at the theatre.

She phoned me at midnight to wish me a happy new year, but it didn't really mean much.

It was nice to hear from her though. I know I have a special place in her heart, but we really don't need to be with one another anymore.

After I put down the phone, I decided I was going to tell her I was leaving. She could have the apartment and all the furniture.

I would find myself another place to live.

03/24/00
Hi. I decided to sleep in the spare room after all. We both need an uninterrupted sleep. I really don't think you wanna be awakened at 6:15am. So anyhoo.

Love you. Check out the awesome job on the bathroom. And I'll let you in on a top secret message from headquarters:

Clean Taps are Happy Taps!

Reply:
When I was at work someone told me they saw my girlfriend dancing at the bar with my assistant manager. She said the two were dancing all the slow songs together. I tried to look angry, as any good boyfriend should, and asked a ton of questions. When I was satisfied, I thanked her for the information and she went back into the theatre to watch the remainder of the movie.

It did not surprise me to hear this. She had mentioned my assistant manage often when we talked. It would seem that he caught her attention. It was then that I realized she had taken some fancy to him. With the atmosphere at home and her growing impatience with our relationship, I began to think that maybe this was the person she had chosen to break up with me for good.

I always knew that it was essential for her to stray, but this was too close to the farm. A relationship like this was going to be very difficult to manage in terms of keeping up my professionalism at work and not interfering with her growing independence.

I know I have to tread a fine line.

But even more troubling, should I encourage such a relationship?

03/27/00
Don't forget to pick me up at 2:30 today.

I was figuring out money stuff this morning. Next week, for music, you'll be getting $180. I do believe that includes the odd lesson that hadn't been paid this month (March). Also, my paycheck is going to be nice, so I figured I can give you about $170, or even more, depending on how much tax they snag. So all next week, with April (+March) music plus my paycheck, you should get about $350. Does that make you happy? Anyhoo. Gotta go to work.

Reply:
There is tension between my assistant manager and myself that is putting a strain on the whole staff. I don't know if he knows that I am aware of his advances toward my girlfriend.

To make a complicated situation even worse, more has happened.

Ironically, or call it fate, a number of her girlfriends from her hometown have moved here. She spends most of her time with them.

I am so grateful I met a girl like my best friend. She showed me there *is* something worth living for. Through her I see that life is not a muddled mess that has no meaning or purpose.

Value is not right or wrong, good or bad, and it has nothing to do with God.

From value we beget virtue, both on a collective level as well as an individual level.

By helping others fulfill themselves to the utmost, we can be attributed with the civic virtues of temperance, courage, and justice.

As individuals helping other individuals on a more personal level we can be called heroes.

But what it means is that life is not something that should be squandered. It is not some great party that lasts forever.

We must try to achieve and accomplish all that we can as individuals and as a species.

If we don't, we not only fail ourselves, but we fail whatever created us.

Value, determined by our potential, objective in nature and comprehensible only to the individual, encompasses the meaning of life and our existence.

Taken all together, it sums up our existence as a species, not only on this world but for all of existence.

For sometimes it is lost upon us, that no matter what may be said, we are unique and full of meaning.

03/28/00
Hi love. The time is almost 9:30, and I'm starting to zonk out. So I think I'll head off to bed. Most of my night consisted of watching TV, and just listening to music.

Don't forget to pick me up at 4:00 tomorrow. Man, today was boring. I got all my stuff done in the morning, so my afternoon was spent cleaning stuff and scrubbing potatoes. Tons of fun. Tomorrow's gonna be pretty much the same. Boring as heck. Oh well. Good money. And it keeps me out of trouble.

Anyhoo…I'm going to bed.

Reply:
At work I have decided to put more pressure on my assistant manager than normal. I'll give him less room to manoeuvre and I am removing some of his authority over the rest of the staff.

He has nothing much to look forward to in life right now. His personal life is in tatters and nothing much is going his way. If his work environment is less friendly and relaxed than he might like it, it might just have the desired effect that I am looking for.

I know he does not like me and I think this will endear me to his thoughts even less.

However, everything is not moving as smoothly as I have hoped.

My girlfriend's behavior is becoming more and more erratic. She now sleeps constantly in the spare room. If I ask her how she is doing she avoids the question or tells me to mind my own business.

She is now constantly wearing all her black clothes day in and day out. But worse than that, she is constantly wearing long-sleeve shirts.

I think she is hurting herself again.

04/01/00
I got the bathroom cleaned, but I didn't do the dishes. There's not enough for a load. But I did the coffee pot, and a pan.

I love you lots, and I'll see you when I get home.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Reply:
When I got up this morning I realized that she had not been home yet. Considering the fact she was having so much difficulty with her emotions, I was worried that perhaps with everything that was going on, she had tipped over into her old suicidal ways. I washed up quickly and headed out the door to look for her. I first went to her girlfriend's house since I did not have the phone number. She was not there. But she had said she had been dropped off at about 6:00 a.m. by my girlfriend and that she was supposed to be on her way home.

This did not make me feel very good. I was about to head over to the hospital to see if she had been admitted. But I didn't go.

I decided that I would check the parking lot of my assistant manger's building first.

There, in the guest parking space, was her car.

It's funny, but I'm not angry.

I pondered about confronting the two but I thought that was a bad idea. She had finally begun her move away from me, and I was not going to stand in her way, especially since I had in my own way driven the two together in the hopes of this very event.

That evening we had a very interesting and frank discussion. I told her that there was nothing more I could do for her.

And in a very cold, deliberately free voice she said that she did not want my help anymore.

And with that, it would seem we were free to go our separate ways.

04/21/00
Hey. I stopped by to pick up a few extra things. I am finally settled in my place now, and so far I'm doing ok.

I phoned Dad, and he said he'll still bring you meat and eggs and stuff, and if I need any, I should just call you and get some.

Isn't it ironic that on April 20/96, we met for the first time? But tomorrow is April 22, so please try to remember Her anniversary. Man, four years since she did that.

Anyhoo, I'll see you around ok? I'll stop by every now and then to grab the mail.

Here's my phone number if you need to reach me and,…

My cage has finally broken
I can fly freely now
My life is no longer dark and dreary
You've saved me from darkness

Nothing can express
My appreciation to you
You've done so much for me
How can I repay it all?

My days will be brighter now
Not a minute will be too long
You've changed my world
I am greatly thankful

Reply:
Along with the note, she left the ring on the kitchen counter.

After she moved out she kept in touch with a phone call here and a short visit there. The last phone call I had from her was a message she left on my answering machine, wishing me a Happy Easter and that she was still with her new guy (not my assistant manager though), and was still living in the house she bought. She also managed to sneak in the fact that she was 12 weeks pregnant.

She also said that she was to be wed in December to her new guy who was the father of her unborn child.

It was only a few days after this phone call that I passed her on the street as she was driving by. She waved, but I did not wave back.

I wanted to. More than anyone could imagine. But I knew I couldn't.

She has to live her life now without me. That, it would seem, was how the world wanted it. But more important it was how she wanted it to be. I tried very hard throughout our relationship to try and make her happy with me but it was not enough.

But there is no blame here. We met under very interesting conditions in which we both were able to help each other in immeasurable ways. It is unfortunate that we were not meant to stay together longer than we did.

As for our discussion regarding morality, ethics and love…

There is no doubt that good and evil, right and wrong, exist. So too does the idea of love. Such ideas have many different definitions within reality. But there is something much more important than such definitions as what is right and wrong, good and bad. It encompasses this value that exists between our contemplations and the consequences of our actions or for that matter our inactions. Unfortunately I do not think I can truly state what definitions or meanings fully constitute the boundaries of this value.

As has been discussed and exemplified here, the consequence of the action or inaction of the individual does not have the aspect of a concrete definition and meaning. Nor does our thinking have such significance either. The circumstances and events that surround any individual are so diffused and numerous, that it is impossible to accurately and truthfully say one thing is ‘this’ or another ‘that’.

However, there does exist a constant in life in regard to the value that seems to be a driving force in all human endeavors, achievements and sometimes our failures. Unlike our forefathers, we must remove ourselves from looking toward the right and wrong, good and bad that has been the impetus of human action and inaction for so long. It is not here that we will find true meaning and definition. It is only within the idea of value that we must look for and confine our understanding and investigations.

But what all the meanings and definitions this value may encompass, I will leave up to you.

I can only hope that I have given a reasonable beginning to a long journey of discovery.

EPILOGUE

Unknown Date…

MY HERO

My hero is not someone you’d
Find in a comic book. Nor can he be found on T.V. My hero is the
Real thing, and he means a lot to me.

There was a time, way back, when
I thought life was over for me. In
My mind, my time had come for me
To leave this world. Fortunately, I didn't succeed. Instead, I met my
Lifetime partner, who will be by my side 'till the day we die.

My hero is very kind, considerate, and
Loving. For him I will do anything. He
Is my hero because he saved me from
My past. To him, I owe my life.

Reply:

I realized that when she finally returned the part of my soul she used to help her through her troubles, it was enriched with a great many things words cannot describe. For this enlightenment and understanding I owe everything.

I see she too is driven by the idea of value and giving.

I hope you like this letter that is so long overdue.

End of Dialogue